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## LEARNING LEARNING

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## Introduction

At the end of 2015, the Learner Development SIG (LD SIG) organized two events—a Forum at the JALT 2015 International Conference in Shizuoka on the theme of “Learners as Teachers: What Teachers Learn From Their Learners” and an informal afternoon conference, *Creating Community: Learning Together 2 (CCLT2)*, at Otsuma Women’s University in Tokyo. This special issue of *Learning Learning* features a collection of articles from presentations at those two events.

The articles, and the way in which they have been developed to their current form, are a reflection of what is important for and about the LD SIG. They cover a rich diversity of learner development practices, contexts, and research approaches. From the LD Forum at JALT2015, Stacey Vye proposes a method of using art to help students comprehend Dörnyei’s Motivational L2 Self System as an academic concept and as a way to picture their own learning development; Andy Barfield and Jenny Morgan report and reflect on their work with a group of inspirational teacher trainers in non-formal education in Burma/Myanmar; Lee Arnold and Mehran Sabet introduce a video project in which Japanese and international students talk about their experiences adjusting to cultures in other countries; and Charlotte Murakami presents a quantitative study of students’ attitudes to using Learning Management Systems.

The LD SIG encourages the participation of students in its activities, and both teachers and students took part as presenters in the LD Forum and CCLT2. The second half of this special issue of *Learning Learning* features articles from CCLT2 and opens with an article by an undergraduate student Erina Iwasa. In her short paper, Erina traces the change in the way gender is represented in popular culture in Japan, and the influence of this on society, including learners and teachers; Lee Arnold next discusses the potential of photojournalism to project students’ imaginations into their writing about the lives of refugees; Jenny Morgan then shows how her students came

to regard English as a lingua franca in their exchanges with local people during fieldwork in Cambodia; and Andy Barfield closes the second half by exploring how experimenting with different written genres can enable students to develop both creativity and criticality in understanding global issues. Despite the great range of work, the articles in this special issue share some important characteristics. In the first place, they not only show innovative learner-centered practices, but they also seek to understand these practices from different perspectives, including—crucially—the learners’. Technology is moreover seen across different contributions as a powerful means for teachers to engage with learners, and for learners to engage with each other and with the world. In as much as learner development is about empowerment, these articles, in strikingly distinct ways, show learners being guided and encouraged to take the initiative to heighten their awareness of themselves and of others, and becoming empowered to take action by speaking out.

This collection is also notable for the degree of collaboration that has gone into its production. Two of the articles are the product of collaboration between researchers, and all of the articles have been developed through critical dialogue between the writers, editors (Lee Arnold, Andy Barfield, Charlotte Murakami, Alison Stewart), as well as translators (Chika Hayashi, Yoko Sakurai, Michiko Imai). All of us believe that writing about learner development is best achieved through praxis: a recursive process of critical and constructive dialogue and revision. We also believe that learner development is never ending, and we hope that reading the work in this special issue of *Learning Learning* will prompt you to respond with insights from your own experiences or to embark on research of your own to continue to create new understandings of learner development.

*Lee Arnold, Andy Barfield, Charlotte Murakami, and Alison Stewart (October 2016)*

## Art and the Motivational L2 Self System in a University Course

### 大学授業におけるアートと L2 セルフシステム論

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#### Abstract

This article reports on the use of art in a 15-week English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course for students to understand and interpret Zoltán Dörnyei's tripartite second language (L2) motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2009). Four Japanese male and three international female university students took the elective ESP course and studied the tripartite L2 motivational self system held once a week for 90 minutes. They collaboratively learned about how this motivational framework is connected to their language learning through note taking on reading assignments, learner-led discussions, and support from the instructor. Successively, each learner drew a pictorial representation of their language learning based on the three parts of the L2 motivational self system: their learning experiences, their ought-to self, and their ideal self. Afterwards, they presented and explained their drawings to each other, and then they wrote an academic paper based on the readings, their presentation, their artwork, and their reflections. The article explains how these students became more aware of their language learning by using art in this course. It also reports how these particular classroom practices helped the students grow as self-directed learners.

#### 要旨

本稿は、15 週にわたる English for Specific Purposes(ESP): 目的別英語教育)の授業で、Zoltán Dörnyei's の提唱する第2言語習得を動機づける L2 セルフシステム(Dörnyei, 2009)を成す三要素を指導するにあたり、学生を理解や解釈を深めることを目的に用いたアートに関する報告である。本授業(選択科目)は週 1 回 90 分の授業形態で、4 名の日本男子学生と 3 名の女子外国人学生が履修し、L2 セルフシステムの三要素について学習した。そして、この動機づけの枠組みが、リーディング課題のメモ、学習者主導で行った議論、そして教員からのサポートを通じた自分たちの語学学習がとにかく結びつくかを協働的に学んだ。続いて、L2 セルフシステムの「学習経験」、「義務自己」、「理想自己」の三要素と照らし合わせ、学生個々の語学学習を絵で表現させた。そして、学生たちは自身の絵を互いに説明し合い、リーディング、プレゼンテーション、内省もふまえて論文を書いた。本論ではアートをを用いることでいかに自分の語学学習を意識し自覚することができるようになったかを明らかにするとともに、本実践が自律した学習者としての成長も促すことに繋がったかを考察する。

#### Keywords

learner development, L2 motivational self system, motivation, self-directed learning 学習者ディベロップメント、第二言語習得を動機づけるセルフシステム、動機、自主学习

#### Introduction

In 2001, as a Master of Arts candidate in a TESOL course taught by Nanci Graves and Alan Mackenzie, I noticed my in-service teacher classmates and I were able to learn from expressing our ideas creatively through art by drawing pictures about what autonomy in language learning meant to us. Because the practice of utilizing art was beneficial for creating greater self-expression while

learning new concepts, I have been encouraging undergraduate English as a foreign language (EFL) students to depict language-learning concepts through art. In a 15-week term, I wanted to find out if four Japanese male and three international female students who were taking an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) elective course on Zoltán Dörnyei's tripartite second language (L2) motivational self system would find



value in exploring their language learning through art. In this article, I will briefly describe the motivational framework, and the classroom procedures of the 15-week course. I will also share samples of note taking, and the art of two students accompanied with their reflections in hopes that the reader might explore ways to incorporate and adapt art in their own EFL classrooms.

### A Concise Overview of the L2 Motivational Self System

I will briefly describe the L2 motivational self system and its relation to learning a second or other language for the unfamiliar reader. In a series of case studies from 2005, Dörnyei (2009) provided convincing evidence using a tripartite L2 motivational self system that described the self in relation to one's motivation for learning a language. First, he defined the *ideal L2 self* as the degree to which the learner would like to become a user of their L2 target language; second, the *ought-to L2 self* is the extent to which the learners believe they need to meet others' expectations to work around any negative learning outcomes; and third, the *L2 learning experience* is the motivation related to the learners' learning environments and experiences (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). Since the creation of Dörnyei's framework, teacher-researchers in Japan have replicated his hypothesis of the tripartite model (see Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009) or have modified the self system model slightly for research in their specific contexts (see Apple, Falout, & Hill, 2013; Falout, 2013; Irie & Brewster, 2013; Kaneko, 2012; Munezane, 2013; Murray, 2011; Yashima, 2009). Next, I will describe the course and the students' representations of their learning depicted in their L2 motivational art.

### The Context

In a 15-week, 90-minute elective course held once a week at a public university in the Kanto area, four Japanese male and three foreign female students at different stages in their undergraduate studies of various majors (five first-year students and two fourth-year students) agreed to participate in this

informal account of classroom practice with permissions. These students chose pseudonyms to conceal their identity. They studied Dörnyei's tripartite framework by exploring their own learning practices. The students' English levels also varied, and their most recent TOEIC placement test scores were approximately between 410-680.

This English for Specific Purposes 1 (ESP1) course was provided by the English Center during the 2014 academic year as one of eight first-year elective ESP1 content offerings. In addition, there were eight corresponding second-year ESP2 courses where the teachers chose the subject material, which ranged from genetics to the history of piracy. However, the common core goals in the ESP1 were to:

- identify and discuss the theme of the course and established clear connections with related topics;
- summarize, analyse, and synthesize the main arguments of the academic readings and lectures through pair and group discussions; and
- express a critical understanding of the contents of the course in the form of a speaking presentation and a final research paper.

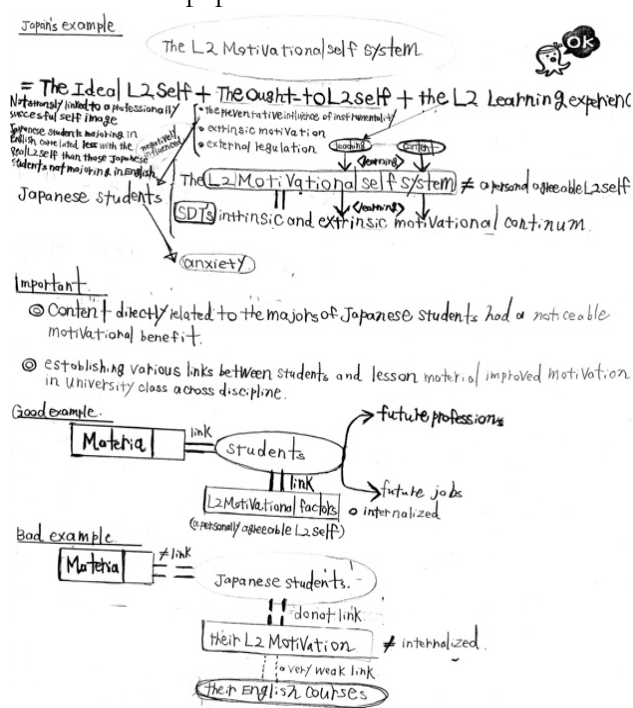


Figure 1. Masato's Note Taking A on Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009.

In the first month of the course, the reading assignments for Dörnyei's tripartite framework were from Edsall and Saito (2013) and Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009). Owing to the level of difficulty of the readings, I assigned excerpts of each text, rather than the complete texts; for example, in Edsall and Saito (2013), I selected the brief section about L2 motivational self system research in Japan. Then, for each reading, note taking was assigned in preparation for learner-led discussions that gave support for students to internalize the meaning of the content. Samples of note taking from previous student coursework on other subjects were provided in order to help them visualize what was expected for their homework. Displayed below are random selections of two of the students' notes with self-chosen pseudonyms. Masato's Note taking A (see Figure 1) is a sample of a portion of his homework on the reading from the Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009) chapter, while Eri's Note taking B (see Figure 2) is a section of her note taking from the Edsall and Saito (2013) article.

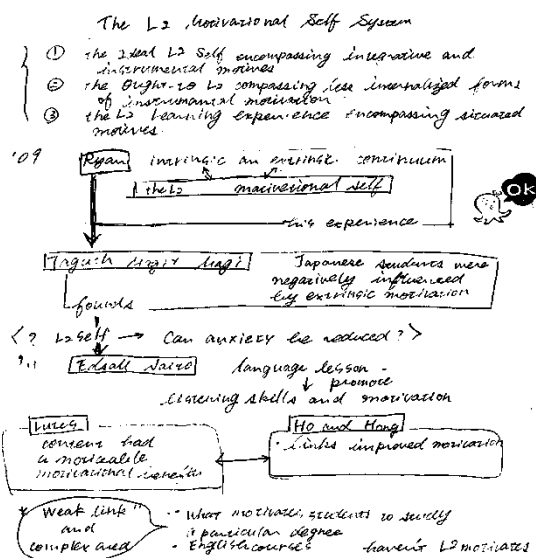


Figure 2 Eri's Note Taking B on Edsall and Saito, 2013.

The learner-led discussions of the readings were possible with the support of their notes and guidance from me when they had queries. Nevertheless, the students focused on the framework itself, rather than what the model meant for their own learning outcomes. Therefore, as best I could, I drew a simplistic representation of my L2

motivational self system learning for Japanese with definitions of the framework adapted from Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011). My ought-to L2 self was a small tree with a river flowing past it that prevented closer contact with a larger tree that depicted my ideal L2 self, and the weather in the drawing

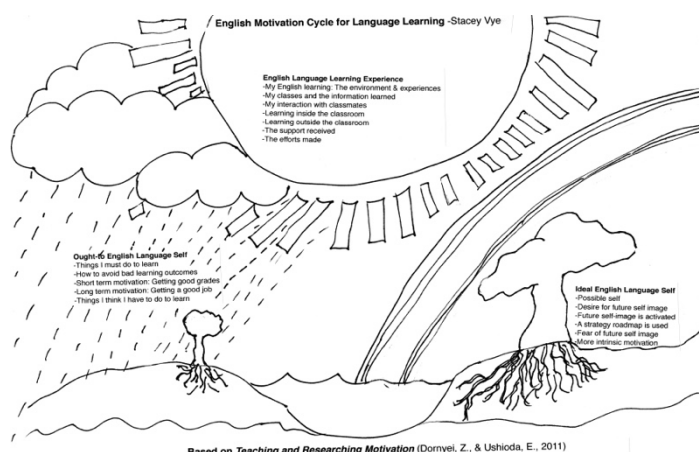


Figure 3. Stacey's Visual Representation of Her L2 Motivational Self System.

reflected my language learning experience with rough and pleasant weather patterns (see Figure 3).

This sample was provided before each student drew their own model in the hope that they would be able to personalize the framework for their own language learning experiences.

With the sample of my "dodgy" drawing in hand, each student borrowed a set of coloured pencils and drew how they felt the tripartite model expressed themselves and their L2 motivational experiences. After viewing the students' assignments, I was concerned they might have acted to put on "a mask of autonomous learning behaviours" to please the instructor, as Breen and Mann (1997) claim that learners might do. Most of the weather and tree images in their drawings were similar to mine, so I wondered if the students wanted their work to appear favourable to me. When I sought to clarify this concern with them, the students reported that during the pre-drawing stages, it was a struggle to conceptualize their L2 self-system in a concrete manner. Consequently, they may have preferred to adapt some visual metaphors from my

drawing, which they were then able to personalize their art with so that it reflected more of their own L2 identity. Successively, each learner drew a pictorial representation of the L2 motivational self system based on the three sections as it related to themselves. Afterwards, they wrote a paper derived from the readings, their visual representations, and their reflections on the subject.

### Two Students' Depictions of Their Motivational Self System

I will continue by displaying the visual representations of art with the corresponding writing passages of Maria, a fourth-year female student and Fumi, a first-year male student. These two students were selected because they described and referred to their art in their papers the most. Following their descriptions, I will briefly write my reflections about what I learned from their work.

#### *Maria's L2 Motivational Self System*



**Figure 4.** Maria's L2 Motivational Self System.

#### *Maria's Language Learning Experience*

...My interest in English emerged when I started to watch American's TV shows, because I needed to understand the scene by myself without translations. Have you ever watched some movies in English and noticed that some phrases are different then the subtitles? When they make the subtitles, they change some parts depending on the language and the audience. Even when my English was poor I noticed that, and I wanted to understand more English to know the real meaning of the story.

*Then, I entered cram school ....One class that helped me a lot was the Newspaper article class because even though I was living in Japan, I studied ... when I was 14 years old so my Kanji was so bad and I did not know difficult words. However, in this newspaper class we needed to translate some articles, and then I could study English, Japanese, and what was happening in the word at the same time. At that time, I realized that knowing English is not enough. Reading some economics and business articles, I had interest in working at some company and make my knowledge base greater. Then I decided to study more business and I entered... University.*

#### *Maria's Ought-to Self*

*My ought-to self represents my ... University English environment. I must have to practice my English to be fluent in this language in order to have a good career, but I need to take credits of economics, so I do not have time to take English classes at university. In this environment, I have rainy days with some obstacles that look like a mountain [see Figure 4]. The rain represents this bad environment. Here I need to climb the mountain to go to my ideal L2 side, but I am afraid to walk in the rain and get wet. To avoid bad learning outcomes, I need to be confident and just go straight. It means, I do not have time to take classes, but I can practice outside of the class too. It is right to say that sometimes it is difficult to overcome these difficulties alone, so I use my umbrella that represents my English teacher Stacey. She always helps me inside and outside of the class. With confidence and my umbrella helps me so I can climb the mountain and go to my ideal L2 side [see Figure 4].*

#### *Maria's Ideal Self*

*At last I will explain my ideal L2 self. It represents me at the future with a lot of people around me [The people depicted on the sunny side of the mountain in Figure 4.], because I believe that when you know a lot of languages you can make a lot friends and know a lot of people because you can travel around the world, you can work with that languages, but the most important is if you know a lot of languages you can improve yourself. Being fluent in English, I could read a lot of articles that are related with my major, ... I also will watch TV shows without subtitles that was my first goal of be fluent in English. Therefore, improving myself I will be a better person, I can work*



*in a big company or have my own business and I can talk with people around the world using English, so I can attract people around me.*

#### Fumi's L2 Motivational Self System

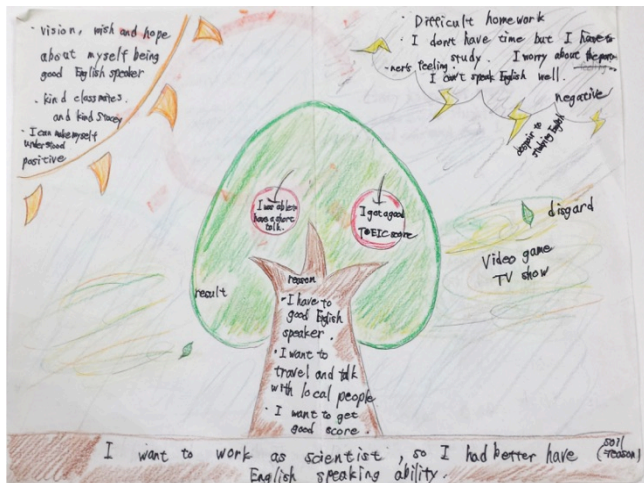


Figure 5. Fumi's L2 Motivational Self System.

#### Fumi's Language Learning Experience

*I started to study English when I was in the sixth grade. At that time an American teacher came to my elementary school, and we repeated his words after he spoke certain words. It was enjoyable. When I was junior high school student, the teacher came to teach me English Grammar. But it was easy, and there was practice to speak, so I could still enjoy the subject.*

#### Fumi's Ought-to Self Combined With His Ideal Self

*However, when I became high school student, Learning English became boring and difficult. The purpose of learning English changed from becoming a good English speaker to prepare for the entrance exams. And I had to do so much homework that I could not enjoy learning English. I think this is symbol of my "Ought to English Learning." Due to that, my motivation faded out. Explaining this with ...[see Figure 5], strong rain as "Ought to English Learning" don't stop and my tree as my will can't receive sunlight.*

*However, after I entered this university, my climate improved. My motivation appeared again. As you can see, we can select classes in university, so I can change my attitude about learning English from passive to active. Moreover, I have clear reasons to study English. For example, they are being able to speak with companies in laboratory or local people when I travel to foreign countries, getting high*

*TOEIC score and so on. If we have imaginable goals and an active attitude, it is "Ideal learning English," I thought. In other words in ...[see Figure 5], my tree has strong trunk and rich soil. However, that continued for only two months and it was difficult to keep an ideal attitude. Therefore, I find students cannot have high motivation, and I think we need "Ought to English Learning" in order to continue studying. Of course, ideally speaking, it is the best to keep high motivation, but it is impossible unless we have strong wills or strong reasons. Almost all people cannot have both, so now I think we need both "Ideally" and "Ought to" in order to continue to study. In other words, tree needs water and sunlight to grow up [sic].*

#### Reflections on the Students' Art and Their Motivational L2 Self Systems

Reflecting on Maria's and Fumi's art and writings, although their TOEIC levels and communicative English varied greatly, they both perceived their ideal self more than their counterparts. It seemed logical that Maria made the connection with her ideal self and her future work using English, Japanese, and Portuguese as a fourth-year student because she was nearing graduation and had given her future career a lot of thought. She reported that by engaging in art and the process of exploring one of her L2 languages, it was useful for her to obtain a better understanding of the value of her identity as a multilingual person in Japan who looks foreign in appearance. This is why she placed herself with a supportive group of people on the sunny side of the mountain in Japan in her drawing. In other words, rather than struggling to fully assimilate into Japanese culture, she embraced the idea that she had a lot to offer personally and professionally in society as a soon-to-be Japanese national who is multicultural and trilingual.

Like Maria, Fumi also had a much stronger connection between his ought-to self and his future ideal self than his first-year counterparts. He explained during in-class discussions with his classmates and in written reflections that he had created a positive English identity before he entered high school, but his English self became

damaged while doing drill-and-kill type exercises in preparation for the English examinations for university. He also suspected that if he took elective English classes in university, he could have more control over what he wanted to learn, so he chose this course. However, the process of looking at one's L2 self was more pleasurable than he imagined because he realized his English identity was, firstly, part of himself, and, secondly, had been damaged by English instruction in high school in Japan.

The remaining five students' perceptions of their ought-to-self also revealed some aspects of hardship from cramming in high school for university entrance exams, yet they did not have a strong connection to their ideal L2 self, although learning English was a desired learning goal of theirs. Nevertheless, the process of creating art, in-class discussions with classmates, writing weekly reflections, and writing a paper after their presentation helped them to better understand critically what the tripartite system was and its relation to their own self-directed learning. A take-away for the reader who is interested in trying this motivational L2 self-system process in class is that all students reported discovering more about the process of their language learning. Although for Maria and Fumi the discovery of new aspects of their own identity beyond simply learning a language was a particularly powerful experience, all seven students reported that the process raised their awareness about their language learning. A common realization among the students was that cramming for the English entrance examinations, where their ought-to L2 self seemed daunting, damaged their enthusiasm for studying English. Finally, although it is hard to generalize from such a small-scale study, the shared experiences of these seven students seemed to provide an opportunity for learner development because they were encouraged to look slightly more towards their L2 English ideal self and their self-directed learning. The reason for this is they seemed to realize they were not alone in feeling bad about their high school English instructional experiences and they gained

more confidence about learning English for their own reasons.

### Conclusion

To conclude, I considered whether students who took a 15-week English elective course on Zoltán Dörnyei's tripartite L2 motivational self system would find value in exploring their language learning through readings, note taking, and art. First, I displayed the artistic representation of the L2 self system and excerpts from the final papers of two students whose engagement with the task seemed to go beyond their language learning experience and to move toward visualization of their ideal L2 self as part of their emerging identity. Secondly, I found that all seven students had studied by traditional rote memorization of English in their high schools regardless of their nationality and educational context. This process of describing their shared experiences about prior difficulties learning English with drawings and note taking enriched the class discussions, which in turn encouraged the students to think more about English as it related to their future identity without worrying as much about how they ought to learn English. Lastly, this write-up of classroom practice using art was not intended as a formal study but, rather, was carried out in hopes that the reader might explore ways to incorporate and adapt art in their EFL classrooms to illustrate concepts that otherwise might be difficult to comprehend.

### Acknowledgements

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## Learning Together With an Extraordinary Community of Educators in Non-State Education in Burma/Myanmar<sup>1</sup>

ビルマ・ミャンマーでの非国家教育での特別な教育者  
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### Abstract

In this article we focus on what we have learnt from doing teacher education workshops in Burma/Myanmar with an inspiring group of trainers of trainers working in non-state education (aka non-formal education). These trainers are active in monastic schools and education and development NGOs. In this article we trace the development of our involvement in these workshops and explore how we have come to understand the “active reflective learning” approach that we take as a process of working towards a creative sense of critical literacy rather than purely skills training. Specifically we consider the complex but minimum scaffolds we used for different workshops and also look at questions of multilingualism in such in-service education.

### 要旨

本稿では、ビルマ・ミャンマーで非国家教育（別称：ノン・フォーマル教育）に携わる革新的な指導者グループと一緒にに行った教員教育のワークショップ実施体験から得られたことを論じる。この指導者グループは、修道院学校、教育、NGOの開発に意欲的に取り組んでいる。本稿では、ワークショップでの私たちの関わり方の変化を追い、単なるスキルトレーニングではなく、批判的リテラシーの創造的な感覚育成を目指し取り組む過程である「アクティブ・リフレクティブ・ラーニング」のアプローチをどのようにして理解するに至ったかを探究する。特に、様々なワークショップで用いた複雑だが最小限に留めた足場かけの在り方を考え、現職教員養成における多言語主義に関する論点についても考察する。

### Keywords

non-state education in Burma/Myanmar, teacher education, active reflective learning, critical literacy, creativity ビルマ/ミャンマーの非国家教育、教師教育、アクティブ・リフレクティブ・ラーニング、批判的リテラシー、創造力

### Introduction

Our presentation in the Learner Development forum at JALT2015 focused on what we had learned from running a week of teacher education workshops in Yangon in March 2015 with an inspiring group of trainers working in non-state education (aka non-formal education). They are active in education and development NGOs and monastic schools in Burma/Myanmar, and a large part of their work involves training trainers and teachers, working across the

basic education and secondary curriculum<sup>2</sup> (not just in English education), doing vocational training, and running projects with trainers and teachers from local communities, often in rural areas where basic education resources (both human and material) and access to education are limited. The trainers work in Burmese and local languages; they also use English for personal and professional purposes, drafting project proposals in English for donor organisations, writing reports in English too, and meeting

<sup>1</sup> The name of the country is contested in English. The previous military regime changed the name of the country from “Burma” to “Myanmar” without consulting the people about this change. For this reason many English-speaking Burmese (including Aung San Suu Kyi) prefer to use “Burma” rather than “Myanmar” in English. In the rest of this article we use “Burma” to refer to the country, although we also recognize that ミャンマー is commonly used in Japanese.

<sup>2</sup> As of 2016, basic education means five years in primary school, four years in middle school, and two years in high school.

with international organisations to present and discuss their work.

Non-state education in Burma strives to address the needs of the large numbers of children who do not complete primary or secondary education. UNICEF figures for 2012 suggest that only 75% of children complete primary education in Burma, with around 50% of children enrolling in secondary school (UNICEF, 2013). Children in Burma may take non-state education for different reasons, and these reasons point to wider social conditions that impact directly on the work of trainers and teachers in non-state education. First, children's families may not be able to afford to pay for school uniforms, materials or other costs that participation in state education involves. On the other hand, parents may not believe education is necessary, and/or the children may need to work to help their family survive. In some cases this means that the children cannot attend school regularly, and have time for their education only after completing several hours work in the day. Another reason is that the children in non-state education may have been internally displaced because of conflict, land-grabs<sup>3</sup>, or natural disasters. It is possible too that ethnic minority children struggle with Burmese as the medium of instruction and consequently drop out of school. Parents may also send their children away from areas at risk of violence or conflict so that they grow up safely and can complete their basic education. Those children that do not get a regular basic education are often exposed to situations of great vulnerability (e.g., violence, trafficking, poor diet, drugs, HIV/AIDS, child labour, to name but some of the many threats that they may face).

We learnt a tremendous amount from working with these trainers and understanding the work that they do, and the communities that they work with. In this short paper, we trace the development of our involvement in these workshops and explore

how we have come to understand “sustainable teacher education” as a process of working towards a creative sense of critical literacy rather than purely skills training.

### **Learning With Others to Develop the Workshop Approach**

Our involvement in these workshops has come from becoming more and more familiar over several years with the work that different civil society organisations do in Burma, particularly those working on grassroots non-state education issues in post-Nargis Burma.<sup>4</sup> In the summer of 2010, Andy had the opportunity to interview Su Su Lwin, the founder of an education NGO working on a Child-Centred Approach (CCA) for non-state education and producing low-cost recyclable learning materials (Barfield, 2012). In August 2012 Bill Mboutsiadis and Andy observed several trainer of trainer (ToT) workshops in Yangon for developing CCA for non-state education. They also learnt about the trainers' local contexts, the work they did, and their interest in developing their English for personal and professional purposes. Further discussions took place with different individuals in Yangon, including Aye Aye Tun, a child rights specialist working on grassroots education development projects in Burma, who was instrumental in making arrangements for Joe Tomei and Andy to conduct two initial weeklong workshop programmes in March 2013 and May 2014 (Barfield & Tomei, 2012, 2013).

Although these first workshop programmes had a strong focus on English skills development, the trainers that Andy and Joe worked with were not simply concerned with English education. We wondered how we might move the focus of the workshops beyond English skills training and connect directly to the wider social issues that the trainers and their local communities

<sup>3</sup> A 2015 report by Global Witness, *Guns, Cronies and Crops*, provides details about land confiscation by different powerful groups in Burma. It claims: “By 2013, 5.3 million acres of land - 35 times the size of Myanmar's capital Yangon - had been leased to investors for agriculture. More than a quarter of this total is now covered by rubber plantations.” For more details see

Global Witness (2015). See also Myanmar Times (22 December 2015) for a more recent mass media update.

<sup>4</sup> Cyclone Nargis struck on May 2 2008 killing more than 140,000 people in the Irrawaddy Delta area. In the absence of a government response (Human Rights Watch, 2010), civil society organisations (CSOs) stepped forward to provide humanitarian assistance. Many CSOs greatly expanded their activities as a result.





**Figure 1.** Water Issue Categorisation and Labelling (March 2015 Workshops).

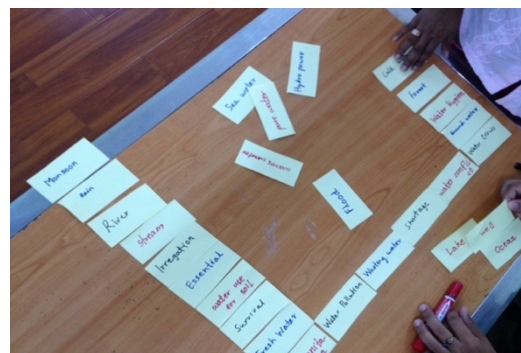
were dealing with. In 2014 Andy and Joe started to introduce a focus on life skills and experimented with taking pollution and transport issues in Yangon as a theme for some activities. These changes also struck a chord with Jenny who had done several skills-focused teacher training workshops in Vietnam from 2010 to 2013 and who similarly wanted to try to make such teacher education work more developmental, appropriate, and relevant to local participants' experiences and needs. The three of us discussed these questions at the 2014 Pan SIG Conference where Andy and Joe presented on their work in Burma (Barfield & Tomei, 2014). To extend our understanding, we drew further on work done in the UK on critical literacy, citizenship, and teacher education (Andreotti & Warwick, 2007; Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, undated; Warwick, 2008) and looked at the case made for critical thinking training for “NGO field staff” and “developing country professionals” (e.g., Foley, 2008; Richmond, 2007). With Joe facing many other outreach commitments,

Andy and Jenny agreed to team up for the March 2015 Yangon workshop programme.

### Active Reflective Learning, Multimodality, and Voice

Our Learner Development forum presentation-display at JALT2015 introduced the trainers and their working contexts, as well as workshop themes and activity sequences, which we worked with in March 2015. We focused on life skills, critical thinking, personal English development, and producing low-cost materials, taking water issues as a main content area. Water issues are central to communities in Burma, and for local people water supply, hygiene, safety, and shortages are fundamental matters of health, survival, and development. We used a number of different activities around water issues, some of which are shown in Figures 1 to 3 below.

Figure 1 shows three trainers sorting around 50 water images into groups and deciding what issue each group of images involves. In Figure 2 a pair of trainers are doing a vocabulary-building activity where they organise water vocabulary into a chain, whereas Figure 3 illustrates how pairs later practised making a proposal for a water project in stages by placing key point cards on the floor and then walking and talking through their ideas. In these activities the materials are low-cost, featuring locally relevant content, with ideas and vocabulary generated by the participants themselves. The activities are also physically interactive.



**Figure 2.** Water Issue Vocabulary Sorting and Chaining (March 2015 Workshops)



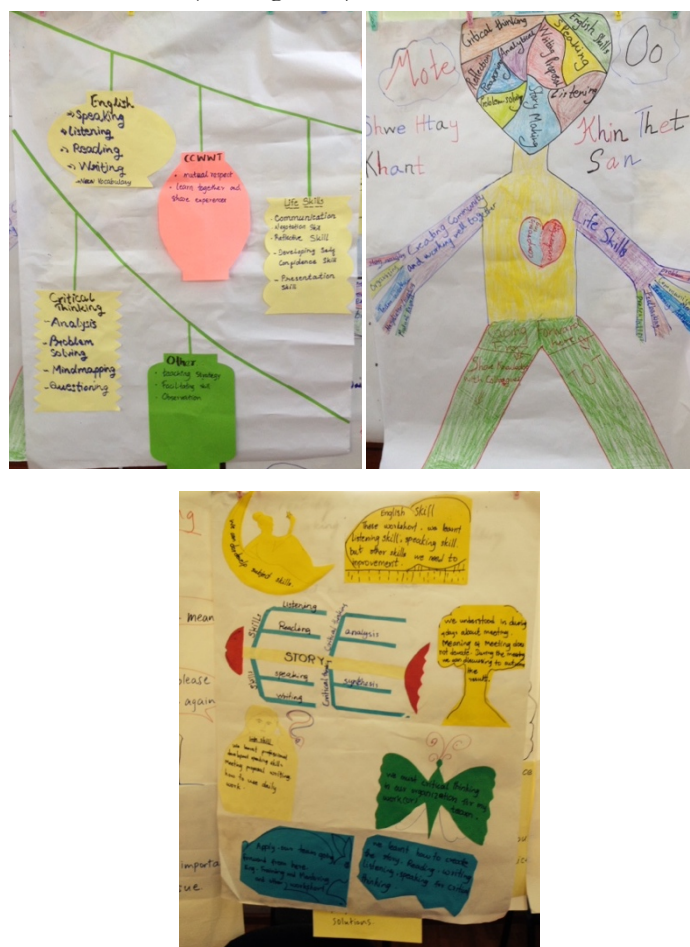
**Figure 3.** Stepping Through Ideas for ) Water Project Proposal (March 2015 Workshops)

The trainers we worked with all brought a wealth of knowledge and expertise from their lived experiences. It was important for us to see them as the experts for their contexts, communities, and the society they live and work in. We were there to learn together from them, and with them, and help them develop their English, critical thinking, and life skills by engaging in different whole-person activities during the week. From this the participants created relevant and appropriate materials for their educational/training needs.

The workshops were *active* in that they involved pair, small- and whole-group activities and collaboration, as well as working with pictures, movement, mime and drama, story telling, and discussion. The workshops also had a strong *reflective* dimension in as much as participants were frequently asked to share their experiences and those of the communities they worked with. They regularly reflected on their development, using learner diaries/journal entries, as well as mind-maps and drawings, to document their reflections.

The forum display provided examples of this active reflective learning approach and featured photos of different activities and artefacts, including some highly colourful posters that the trainers had created to show their development and learning over

the week (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Posters Presenting Participants' Development (March 2015 Workshops).

What was interesting for LD forum participants at JALT2015 was not only the striking visual metaphors that the trainers used, but also the imaginative and powerful combination of colour in the way they voiced their development.

### Puzzles for the March 2016 Programme

Thinking over the discussions that we had during and after the LD forum helped us to crystalize our understanding as we started planning for a new week of workshops for March 2016. We decided to put the primary focus on societal issues (language, environment, sustainable development, democracy) and have a secondary focus on processes and skills (critical thinking, creativity, life skills, and personal English development). This raised new questions about developing our workshop approach.

For reasons of space, we focus here on



the following puzzles. How could we fine-tune the minimum but complex scaffold for the March 2016 workshops? In what ways could we foster critical literacy without becoming lost in written texts? And how might we draw on the work on multilingual histories and practices that the Learner Development SIG's guest at JALT2015, Alice Chik, had presented on and that resonated so strongly for us with a range of social, educational, and political issues in Burma, a richly ethnically and linguistically diverse society where Burmanization<sup>5</sup> has long been a contentious issue? We continue by exploring these puzzles in relation to the workshops that we conducted in March 2016 with a new group of 19 trainers.

#### *Exploring the "minimum but complex scaffold" puzzle*

In response to our post-forum summary on the LD website, Alison Stewart asked us about what we meant by a "minimum but complex scaffold" for the workshops. Discussing Alison's question encouraged us to articulate more explicitly the frame that we used for the March 2016 workshops. On one level, we set up activities with minimum explicit teaching and maximum sharing of participants' ideas and experiences in order to engage participants as fully as possible. On another level, "minimum but complex scaffold" includes for us now a more explicit sense of "theorisation from experience." In the workshops in March 2016, with the greater primary focus on content, we attended not only to the "experiential flow" from one activity to the next, but also to the opportunities for participants to theorise from their experiences and develop a critical perspective on the socio-political issues that they were dealing with.

To take an example, when we introduced sustainable development as a theme for the third day, we briefly demonstrated brainstorming ideas, issues and words to do with sustainable development, then asked the

participants to do the same in pairs, before they talked about what sustainable development means for them, sharing examples from their own experiences and communities. Later, we asked the participants to discuss what they thought their or their communities' priority needs for sustainable development were, and consider in what ways these ideas might be different from official views of sustainable development (e.g., the government, funding bodies, donors, the UN), and why.

In the next part of the workshop we gave to each pair a set of cards with icons of half of the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) on them (see United Nations Sustainable Development, undated). Pairs then discussed and added in English or Burmese key words and phrases to label each of the eight "official" goals that they had (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Labelling Official SDGs and Creating New Ones (March 2016 Workshops).

Next, one member of each pair gathered their pair's cards together and moved to a person who had been working on the other SDGs. Each new pair now pooled their

<sup>5</sup> A recent political history of Burma puts Burmanisation in this way: "...the generals ordered that Burmese was to be the sole language used and taught throughout the entire country's school system, effectively denying all the ethnic groups in the union of Burma the right to use, teach or learn their own language. This,

more than anything, made language the central battleground of Burmanisation, the insistence that in this country of at least one hundred different languages, including at least three distinct language families (Tibeto-Burman, Mon-Khmer, and Tai), everyone had to use only Burmese." (Cockett, 2015, p. 80)



knowledge together before we guided them towards a critical view by asking them to consider these questions:

- \* What matches/doesn't match with your own experiences and communities?
- \* What's missing?
- \* What voices, issues, goals need to be included and heard?

From these discussions pairs created 2-3 new SDGs based on their experiences, communities, and local needs. These drawings were collected and displayed on a shared “Community Resource Poster” with the title “Making Visible Our Sustainable Development Goals.”

Figure 6 further below shows four of the many new SDGs that the group created (“Value religious diversity,” “Reducing corruption,” “No discrimination against all types of disabilities,” and “[Access to proper] toilet[s] for everyone”).

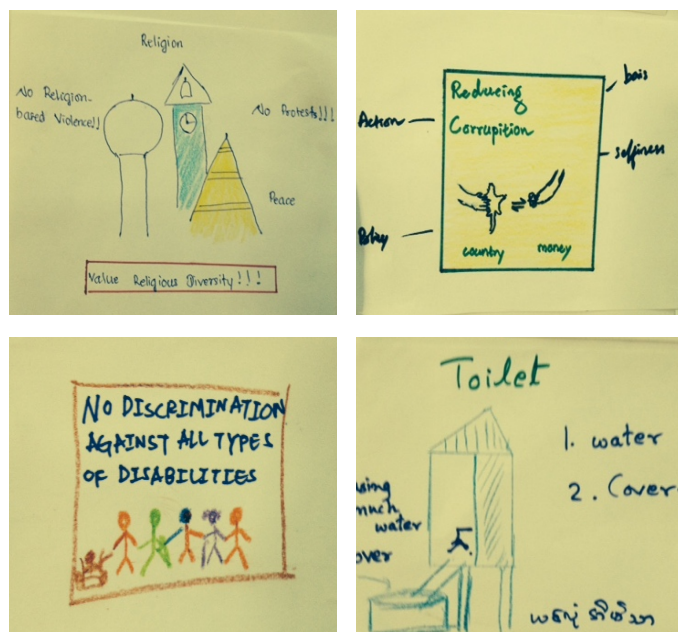


Figure 6. Participants' New Sustainable Development Goals (March 2016 Workshops).

In the two afternoon workshops on the same day the trainers worked in groups of three to create unscripted 3-scene dramas (some in Burmese, others in English, still others mixing Burmese, English and a local language) on a sustainable development issues of their choice, where we asked them

to present a critical view of the issue to raise public awareness. They also put together a poster-pamphlet in English that included three critical questions about that issue for audience discussion, and, later, three tweets of around 40 words or so based on their discussions with the audience. The pamphlets and tweets were also intended to raise public awareness further and were later put up in the room as a “Community Public Awareness Corner” for everyone to view and discuss informally.

Comments such as the following indicate how the participants responded to being asked to draw directly on their own experiences, connect their workshop activities and discussions with their local communities and wider societal issues, and form a critical perspective:

*In the past I did not use to think critically though I had attended RWCT training.<sup>6</sup> It was concerned a lot with the text. But here I had to think critically and had to link the environment with my own experiences. This helped us to reflect on ourselves. In our society people dare not think out of the boundaries. They are afraid of the change. We do not link the ideas that we have got from our lessons with our own community. After attending the workshop I learnt more about thinking skills. I come to know how to think and how to make others think. If we don't think critically, what is our brain for?*

This trainer's reflection not only foregrounds their personal experience and transformation, but also shows how power constrains individuals' thinking and capacity for social change.

As mentioned earlier, we were deliberately working without written texts as input. Instead, we used images as primary resources, all the while trying to develop critical literacy. Talking with each other, and with the participants too, as we moved to and fro between the experiential and the socio-political, helped us to find our way together towards a critical pedagogy appropriate to

<sup>6</sup> This refers to Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) training courses run by the Thinking Classroom

Foundation in Burma. For more details see <http://www.thinkingclassroom.org/about.html>

the community that we were working with.<sup>7</sup>

### *Exploring multilingual identities and practices*

Our second puzzle is connected to our discussions at JALT2015 about Alice Chik's work on visualizing multilingual histories and practices. Both of us were inspired by the drawings that Alice showed in her first workshop, and we thought it would be fundamentally interesting to ask participants in the March 2016 to create portraits of themselves as multilingual language users, particularly on the first day, as they were getting to know each other. We wondered how we might broaden things from the individual to the social, and frame a more critical discussion. We knew that the trainers were coming from Yangon, Mandalay, Shan state, Kachin state, the Ayeyarwady delta area, and Mon state. This was a much greater mix than in previous years. What we were not prepared for, though, was the astounding range of social resources that this group had in the languages that they knew, and which emerged as they talked about and then drew themselves as multilingual language users.

Two examples illustrate this richness. Figure 7 shows the language portrait of a young trainer from Mon state in the south of Burma. Yellow embodies his use of Mon (with family, himself, relatives, work, friends, life, learning). Pink represents his use of Burmese (himself, friends, work, life, learning), while black is connected to his use of English (himself, friends, work, life, learning) and green is for Thai (fun/pleasure with friends, life).

The commentary in his notebook reads:

*Language are more than a tool for communication. They help us to connect ourselves with our own selves, with smaller local communities, and larger global community. As a Mon-speaking person, I feel that's Mon language that assists me in relating myself to the Mon community where my families, relatives, friends and colleagues belong. Similarly Burmese enables me to connect with the Burmese-speaking community, where myself, my other friends and fellow citizens are comprised of.*

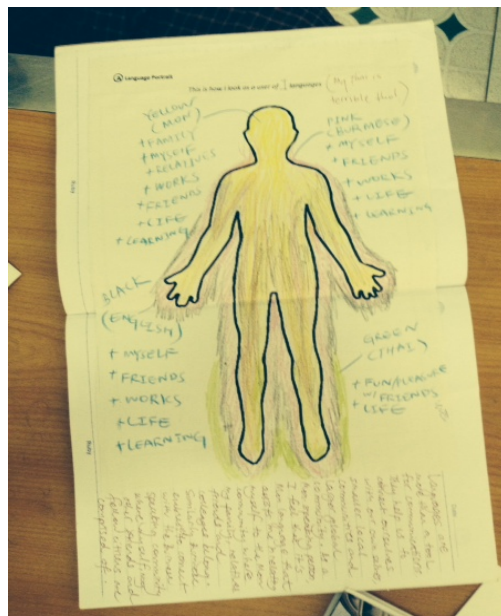


Figure 7. Mon User Multilingual Language Portrait.

Living multilingually is integral to his connections with different communities in Burma, but Mon, a minority language, appears to embody for him a stronger force in creating identity and social cohesion. This is a very different sense of language as an enabling social resource from the oppressive effects of Burmanisation.

Figure 8 further below shows the language portrait of a trainer from Shan state. The languages that she includes are Burmese, English, Chinese, Shan, Korean, and Indian. Her notebook commentary read:

*Burmese is my mother tongue. I feel comfortable whenever I use this language. English is my profession. I have to learn much about that. It can promote my career.*

The picture shows that she sees languages as in her head, where different languages take up different spaces. Interestingly, her commentary positions her use of Burmese in relation to English: Whereas Burmese is a “natural” unreflexive part of herself, English has a particular instrumental value for her work.

To move the perspective towards a wider, more critical discussion of language issues in society, we later asked participants to look through pictures of languages in

<sup>7</sup> This may be close to what Smyth calls “community capacity building” (Smyth, 2011).

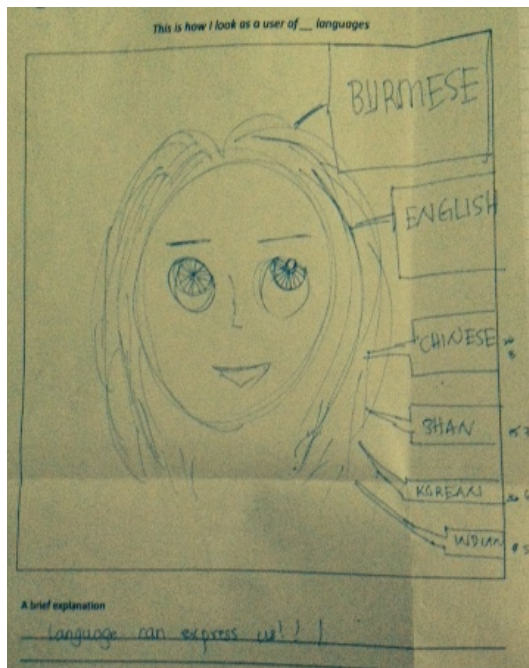


Figure 8. Burmese User Multilingual Language Portrait.

different contexts of use in Burma and label them with key words and phrases (shops signs, adverts, classrooms, newspapers and magazines, dictionaries on smart phones, street names, language learning resources, internet cafés, and so on) and discuss: What languages people have access to in public spaces; which languages are visible and invisible, and by extension, which users are included or excluded, as well as what languages have official status, and which languages are considered valuable or not, and by whom, and why. These discussions led in the final part of the first day to the participants creating short two-minute “public awareness” role-plays in groups of three in which they presented a critical issue of multilingual language use in society.

The participants also wrote reflections in their notebooks, which led one trainer to comment:

*Burmese is my mother tongue, English is my second language, and it makes me active in my work. I also want to study about Japanese and Manipuri, which is a small ethnic group from the border of India. For Japanese I want to study because I have a lot of Japanese friends. If I speak Japanese, I can communicate with them very well. For Manipuri my grandparents come from India. As a family member I should learn about Manipuri language.*

What we find interesting about this

reflection—apart from the high number of languages in her everyday life—is how the writer’s life and family embody many different aspects of the history of modern Burma. Her commentary also underlines the agency that the trainers showed in their multilingual language development and use.

### Continuing Puzzles

In tracing our learning about doing in-service teacher education workshops for trainers of trainers in non-state education in Burma, we have explored in this article how the focus of the workshops moved from English skills training in the initial two years to a stronger focus in 2015 and 2016 on societal issues that impinge on the trainers’ work with their local communities. We have also become more concerned with exploring how to work multimodally on the development of critical literacy. This shift in focus to development and critical literacy over (English) skills training alone is not total. During other workshops in March 2016 we spent time on skills like “active listening” and “mindmapping,” for example. We also included several life skills clinics in the week’s programme, which, for reasons of space, we have not dealt with here. In Yangon, we talked with the participants about why we put issues ahead of skills, and why we thought it was important to have focus on critical thinking/critical literacy. We wanted to find out what they made of this change in emphasis. In these discussions we explained that we were interested in nurturing sustainable development for trainers. This, we thought, largely depended on individuals making a “change from within” in relation to their changing critical understanding of themselves, and their position to their work, their communities, and society. In conversation with a couple of the trainers in a small-group discussion in one of the life-skills clinics, one of the trainers observed, “Yes, we are too busy doing skills training to have time for our own development.” We cannot say whether we have completely resolved the tension between training and development, but we understand more and more that it is not so useful to think in terms



of a binary between “training” and “development.” It is much more a multiplicity that we see ourselves exploring in working creatively towards critical literacy. This is one of the significant puzzles that we are interested in continuing to explore.

We have learnt with, and from, many people in doing these workshops, and we continue to learn a great deal from each other. At the Learner Development Forum in JALT2016 we looked to what we had learned in relation to our own teaching and development in Japan; in this article we have tried to explore more closely our learning with the community of educators in Burma and share more prominently our Burmese colleagues’ voices, experiences, and critical views. We hope this exploration has let readers start to get to know this extraordinary group of professionals, as well as leads to widening discussions and collaboration.

### Acknowledgments

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## In Our Own Words: Japanese and Foreign University Students and Their Reflections on Cultural Adjustment

自分たちのことばでー日本・海外の大学生の文化適応  
に関する省察ー

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### Abstract

Many Japanese university students expect immediate improvements in language skills, as well as cultural awareness, from study abroad programs. Yet complexities may arise beyond what students may foresee. Psychological factors of uncertainty avoidance and dynamics of emotional regulation all profoundly influence homestay students' cognitive behaviors. This paper analyzes selected video interviews with homestay participants on how they viewed their experiences at the time and in retrospect. The video project proved to be beneficial for individual students by enabling them to analyse and better understand their emotional responses to unfamiliar cultural practices, as well as for other students by providing them with role models and authentic cross-cultural issues for discussion. The project also has great potential as a growing database of student stories for further research on study abroad and intercultural learning.

### 概要

多くの日本人学生は留学プログラムに参加することで、文化的意識だけでなく言語能力においても即座に成果が得られると期待している。しかしながら文化的な困難は、学生の予測を超えたところから引き起こされることもある。曖昧さの回避や感情制御のダイナミックスの心理的要因は、ホームステイを経験する学生の認知行動に大きく影響する。本論は、ホームステイを経験した学生を対象に、ホームステイ時とその後の振り返りを通じた自身の経験に対する見方に関するビデオインタビューを分析したものである。このビデオプロジェクトは、留学プログラムに今後参加予定の学生にロールモデルを提示し、異文化間でのリアルな議論のテーマを提供するという点だけでなく、個々の学生が馴染みのない文化習慣への情緒反応を分析し、理解を深められる点においても有益であることを明らかにした。また本プロジェクトは、留学や異文化学習に関する更なる研究のための学生の「物語」を集めたデータベースとしても大きな可能性がある。

### Keywords

homestay, study abroad programs, video reflections, cultural adjustment, emotional regulation  
ホームステイ、留学プログラム、ビデオ、振り返り、文化的適応、感情制御

### Introduction

For many Japanese university students, homestays and study abroad provide enriching experiences of life and learning outside Japan. Homestay programs have been the subject of a large number of studies to date, and numerous benefits for students across cultures have been identified. Such experiences include improvements in

language skills, networks of friendships, and “adoptions” of host families. In the Japanese context, Yashima (1999) finds that such sojourns have an affirmative impact on academic success and enhancement of international orientation among Japanese students upon return, while Hadis' (2005) study in the United States involving around 200 university students reveals similar

expansion of global awareness after even brief stints abroad.

The commensurate experiences of foreign students at Japanese universities may serve alongside those of Japanese engaged in homestays and study abroad as a ripe area for cross-cultural examination, and such experiences may be all the more compelling when they are captured in the students' own voices. This paper details an initial effort of the English Communication Arts (ECA) program at Seigakuin University to document Japanese and foreign students' accounts of their own intercultural experiences abroad and in Japan through short video interviews. The immediate purpose of making such videos is to present the experiences of learners in the processes of adjustment outside their cultures and make these available as learning resources for other students in ECA classes. In the longer term, we hope that, by sharing their experiences, the students recorded in the videos may help contribute to inculcating a sense of intercultural consciousness among the Seigakuin student population.

### **Research on Homestay-Study Abroad Research**

Investigations into homestay and study abroad programs initially focused on their linguistic benefits. Carroll's (1967) intensive research on language acquisition was pivotal in endorsing the benefits of overseas study, finding that even short-term language courses abroad may enable motivated tertiary-level second language learners to make up ground with their peers who had begun their L2 learning comparatively sooner. Subsequent research has nonetheless uncovered psychosocial stresses, particularly as revealed in language learner diaries compiled during overseas sojourns. Jones (1977) extensively details her numerous struggles even as she made significant gains in the target language during a three-month sojourn in Indonesia. Further diary studies (Schumann, 1980; Bailey, 1983; Schmidt & Frota, 1986) reveal other difficulties such as peer competitiveness, pedagogical differences of host educational systems, and

obstacles in forming realistic expectations of language development. Later diary studies by Ellis (1989), Peck (1996), Sachs (2002), and Huang (2005) confirm that such issues may hold true for many learners abroad over time.

Our interest is in such experiences and issues with Japanese and foreign students of Seigakuin University. How do Japanese students at Seigakuin adjust to life outside their cultural boundaries? How do foreign students at Seigakuin cope with life and study in a Japanese environment? While some key sociocultural concepts may explain how students operate outside their cultures, we feel that it is also useful to explore how students reflect on their experiences afterward and how they may come to see them in a different light.

### *Issues Concerning Cultural Adjustment*

In the field of cross-cultural studies, Hofstede's (1980) concept of uncertainty avoidance, which focuses on the degree to which ambiguity is tolerated within specific sociocultural contexts, may be the most emblematic of research about differing cultures and the way in which people are seen to function within them. As insightful as his findings have been, however, they also form a dualistic sociocultural conception, between the West and other cultures, with the West as the normative measure.

Ultimately, it has been difficult to avoid characterizing Japanese cultural dynamics in collectivist terms given the influence of Hofstede's schema, as his research shows that at least some Japanese outside their cultural bounds may indeed feel constrained in situations involving ambiguous outcomes. Yet members of societies do not fit simplistic generalizations of individualism as opposed to collectivism over a wide range of situations; Americans, for example, may not always be as fully individualistic as what members of their society have often been characterized as, while Japanese are not always as collectivist as observers have described them to be from within their society.

Alternatives to dualistic characterizations may yield more nuanced accounts about



individuals and how they handle sociocultural unfamiliarity. The psychosocial concept of *emotional regulation* may offer a more nuanced model for how individuals adjust themselves to the dynamics they encounter in different sociocultural spaces.

### ***Emotional Regulation: Reappraisal and Suppression***

Matsumoto et al. (2008) sum up the role of emotional regulation in goal-orientation and goal-setting as “the ability to manage and modify one’s emotional reactions in order to achieve goal-directed outcomes” (p. 926). They cite Gross (1998) and Gross & John (2003) in defining two main factors of emotional regulation, *reappraisal* and *suppression*, that determine how individuals evaluate, engage with, and adapt to or reject situations they encounter.

Reappraisal may be thought of as an individual’s cognitive strategy of situational reinterpretation, where the circumstances of a given situation prompts one to reevaluate what may differ, perhaps radically, from a similar situation in one’s own culture. To give two examples, a strategy of reappraisal may allow an individual to determine how “safe” it may be to participate in a social gathering in the host culture, or deliberate on when to expect and receive assistance, including even material aid, from local people during travel abroad when they would avoid such situations in the home culture. Situations such as these trigger mechanisms of evaluation, within which possibilities to adjust to or reject the dynamics at play can be processed and acted upon. Reappraisal thus entails a shift in the individual’s belief system.

Suppression, on the other hand, is another type of emotional response. It can be seen as a means of regulating an individual’s response to a given situation, such as acting differently to conform to a local custom. A common manifestation of this might be seen in a Japanese business executive shaking someone’s hand instead of bowing when outside of Japan. While an overuse of suppression can be unhealthy as it can stifle true emotional expression, Gross and Levenson (1997) see some level of

suppression as contributing to a healthy equilibrium that avoids extremes on either end of the spectrum (p. 96). This may make it possible, with regard to the examples shown above for reappraisal, for a person to turn down an invitation to a social event although in one’s own culture it would probably cause offense or lead to a feeling a guilt, or inquire about assistance and material need in a foreign country and receive it, however inappropriate it may seem to a person in a similar situation in the person’s own culture. In contrast to reappraisal, suppression allows individuals to accept alternative beliefs or practices as valid in host cultures while retaining their beliefs about appropriate practices in their own cultures.

Emotional regulation may thus open the door for individuals to respond to cross-cultural situations in ways that do not always necessarily follow the patterns described of their cultures, and that do not cast them as passive, impudent, or guilty—emotions that they may experience if they encountered similar situations in their own cultures. The ability to regulate emotions in the process of cultural adjustment may be increasingly valuable in educational systems that are becoming increasingly multicultural.

### **Foreign Students in Japan**

As Japan has become attractive for foreign students pursuing higher education given its wealth and relatively stable political climate, cross-cultural dynamics become as salient an issue for foreign students in Japan as they are for Japanese students abroad. According to Project Atlas Japan (n.d.), there were a total of 139,185 foreign students studying at Japanese universities by the end of 2014, with 55.9%, or 77,792, coming from China. Such an influx is significant, and foreign students are as ubiquitous on the Seigakuin campus as on other university campuses around Japan.

Despite this presence, a gap has nonetheless been anecdotally noted by faculty and students alike between international students and their Japanese counterparts on a number of university campuses, including Seigakuin. Foreign students tend to socialize more with their

peers from the same countries both on- and off-campus, indicating that there may not be enough contact between them and Japanese students to promote mutual understanding. Similarly, Japanese students often seem to be too busy with school, work, and club activities to make time for meaningful interaction with their foreign cohorts. Foreign students are not immune to such conditions either, as many also put in long hours of study on top of part-time work schedules, all while adjusting to their new environment.

While a small percentage of Japanese families host international students for short periods such as a few weeks, many are unwilling to accept them for the longer term and thus the majority of foreign students stay in dormitories or in apartments. As a result, contact with their Japanese counterparts may often become limited even on campus.

Given these sociocultural dynamics, how might foreign students adjust to Japanese sociocultural space? And how might Japanese students benefit from the experience and perspectives of foreign students? These are the kinds of issues that we sought to address in the video interview project.

### **The Seigakuin University Student Video Interview Project**

Every year, a number of students participate in Seigakuin University's study abroad programs ranging from 3 to 7 weeks in countries such as Australia, Canada, South Korea, and the United States. Participating students usually have opportunities to share their overseas experiences with other students upon return, but these occasions, which are usually organized by the institution, have been rather infrequent, with low attendance.

For the purposes of this study, as well as for cross-cultural communication and to heighten awareness, we explored ways to more efficaciously publicize the overseas experiences of participants among the general student population at Seigakuin. We sought to create a format for participants to reflect on their experiences while at the same time demonstrating how stepping out of

their comfort zones can bring benefits. These include "appreciation of diversity, the importance of opinions, and open communication" along with "cooperation, the value of individualism and taking care of oneself, and the value of different ways of thinking" (Jones, 1997, p. 31).

The idea of a video interview project was discussed among all five of the full-time ECA program teachers. It was decided to include not only Japanese students, but also international students on campus, in order to capture a fuller spectrum of cross-cultural experiences of our students. Interview questions were prepared in advance and reviewed by the teachers. We sought to find out what impact the students' experiences have had on their interpersonal skills; how they have reflected upon their experiences and tried to analyze them critically; and how they could deal differently with similar issues or problems in future.

Some situations that mainstream Seigakuin students face the first time abroad are usually common to Japanese overseas participants in general and, though they may cause stress, can ultimately benefit them if managed properly. Many Seigakuin students who have not previously traveled abroad may still unwittingly hold misperceptions and fears before departure, such as what their host family members look like, how they would be treated by them, and whether they would be able to find friends from other countries. The immediate aim of the participant video accounts was to break down any lingering apprehensions or misperceptions among students who have yet to go on homestays.

### **Methodology, Aims, and Student Voices**

In the first year of the project, ten students were individually interviewed on video, each in 5-minute segments. Each student was given a set of questions in advance to answer in writing and the answers were discussed and refined with teacher help before each of their recordings took place. The interviews were then transcribed and each clip subtitled. While it would be more rigorous to analyze the videos of every

participant so far, we decided, for the purposes of this study, to focus on a small segment: two female students, one Japanese and the other Chinese, and one male Japanese student.

The three selected participants represented a variety of experiences abroad, and possessed the English proficiency to voice their perceptions comprehensively within the time limit of the videos. While we wished simply for the participants to literally speak for themselves, we also felt they would be capable of articulating responses that would enable us to explore the degree to which they regulated their emotions through reappraisal and/or suppression.

From here on, the students are referred to by pseudonyms: “Yuka” and “Kenji” (each Japanese) and “Jenny” (Chinese). Jenny, Kenji and Yuka had done homestays in Australia, but Jenny differed from the two Japanese students in that she had more cross-cultural experience as a Chinese national, studying full-time in Japan. She was therefore asked to focus on her experiences as a foreign student in Japan given that this was the greater of her experiences and the one that may reveal different insights from those of the Japanese students. Although she was interviewed and recorded in the same way as the other students, her comments serve as something of a gauge by which Kenji and Yuka’s interviews might be compared, based on her comparatively stronger background of intercultural experience. Such insight as well may enable other Japanese students viewing the videos to reflect on their own reactions to particular cultural situations.

Each student felt the homestay experience had been fruitful, albeit with some common problems. Even in these short video segments, their reflections demonstrated a strong sense of where they had been and how they had grown, with a nascent sense of greater self-awareness and self-direction in future sojourns.

#### *Yuka’s Interview*

Yuka came away from the experience feeling grateful to have undertaken it. However, having never previously traveled

outside of Japan, her homestay almost ended shortly after arrival in Australia. Overwhelmed immediately by the differences in people, customs, and environment, she became severely homesick, to the extent that she constantly called home to her parents in Japan, wanting to give up and return. While her mother was concerned about her daughter’s wellbeing, she encouraged her to stay the course and make the most of her time there. Realizing the opportunity she had by being on the sojourn, Yuka decided to make the effort to adjust to her host family life and school setting, and make friends with her Australian and other foreign classmates. Gradually, her experience became a positive one.

Within her interview she evinced a matured attitude to her time abroad, most notably in her realization that what overwhelmed her in the beginning required her to take the initiative in adapting herself within her new setting. She stated:

*I realized that I need to reevaluate my way of thinking and adjust to the new environment better. The change has to start with me.*

*I need to find out more about who I am as an individual and a Japanese citizen. We can overcome inhibition and fear of making mistakes by being open and seeking advice of people around us.*

Jenny’s observation of Yuka’s comment above is reflective of where she saw herself when first settling into her Japanese life and study:

*I came to understand that we live in a diverse world and ought to expose ourselves to different situations in order to eliminate prejudice against certain nationalities.*

#### *Kenji’s Interview*

Kenji had an overall more affirmative experience from the start. He appeared to realize from the beginning that he was not going to be in his comfort zone and therefore required from himself a proactive approach in a variety of situations, most notably such as in connecting with people, exploring on his own, and orienting himself to the pedagogical differences of study at his



institution in Australia. In those terms he was more pragmatic in his outlook up to departure and throughout his sojourn, and consequently had a successful homestay, making friends and showing an eagerness to return. He nonetheless admitted to being shy in certain situations involving groups of people and wanted to try to adjust further in future sojourns. Here were some of his key comments:

- *Being shy is not an option for me when it comes to communicating with strangers.*
- *I have to adapt to the host family's lifestyle and way of doing things.*
- *Next time, I would make a list of goals to accomplish before going overseas.*

Jenny's view on what Kenji experienced also was summed up as follows:

*Approaching people and making yourself approachable is a good way to learn about yourself and others.*

#### *Jenny's Interview*

Given Jenny's background, she could draw on both of her experiences as a foreign student and as a homestay participant to reflect on changes in her understanding about life away from her own culture. In her clip about life and study in Japan, she noted some of the following:

- *My perceptions about Japan have changed. I have realized that stereotyping is wrong.*
- *I have come to appreciate many aspects of Japanese culture, which I did not realize before.*
- *Working in Japan has taught me different ways of communicating with customers, co-workers, and people in general.*

Upon further reflection, she added the following:

- *We, foreign students, need to become immersed in Japanese culture by exposing ourselves to its various aspects. We can learn much more through practical experience.*
- *People act and talk based on their cultural background. If we realize this and respect it, communication becomes much easier.*

Comments such as these come from the longer-term experience she has had living and studying in Japan. Moreover, it forms the kind of insight that she could undoubtedly take with her to Australia in her own homestay there, enabling her to further compare and contrast with greater depth on what is required from herself in emotional regulation. Ultimately, such depth provides valuable insight to others in how they may reflect on their own sojourns, as well as crucial advice for those departing for their first time abroad.

#### **Student Reflections on Cultural Adjustment**

Upon review, student perceptions such as these may be revealing, and frank. To cite one example, when asked about points of Chinese culture that she missed, Jenny observed how some Japanese tend to turn down invitations in ways she feels are sometimes too prevaricating, stating that some Chinese would tend to be less so by comparison, and showing how some Chinese would handle such situations. This may indicate that Jenny's sense of emotional regulation contains a healthy functioning of reappraisal and suppression. In her case, she came to terms with a custom different from her own that, while situations with it may cause tension for her, is a difference she has learned to live and deal with that does not change her affirmative views on her life in Japan. This attitude equips her well for sojourns elsewhere.

By contrast, Yuka's study abroad experience started out disastrously. Perhaps due to her lack of previous overseas travel, she was not initially equipped to handle a sociocultural environment that differed considerably from what she was accustomed to. Yet in reflecting upon her experience in her video session, she appears to have been able to reappraise it in a way that may help her to suppress her initial emotional reactions for better outcomes in future sojourns.

Kenji appears to have had some of these strengths from the outset. Even where he initially lacked Jenny's experience, he understood fully that he was not going to be

within his sociocultural space. He realizes that he could not use his shyness as a justification to avoid possible moments of discomfort. Yet he also demonstrates the ability to reappraise his situation, in terms of both reflecting on what he could have done better and projecting how he would organize his aims for future study abroad.

As we wished to use these videos as program-generated examples of cross-cultural material for our classes where they would be relevant, a trial of preliminary viewings accompanied by vocabulary and discussion question worksheets was carried out in ECA program reading, culture, and travel English classes. Observations of some learners' reactions to the videos, especially in comments among each other, indicated affirmative responses to the participant stories. This may open up potential for such stories as classroom material, along the lines of Murphey's (1996) concept of students as near peer role models.

### Further Directions for the Video Project

Preliminary findings of the value of such stories for participant research and classroom use alike appear promising, and the video project has so far has provided us with a valuable resource which can be used for research and as material for the classroom. We aim to continue the video interview project with incoming Japanese and foreign students for 2017 and the videos will be shown in ECA classes where cross-cultural content is relevant.

We admit that, from a methodological perspective, the present study lacks rigorous qualitative analysis and that our video interview sample is small. The brief time limit of the videos may have constrained the kinds of questions we prepared in advance, and given us an incomplete picture of the students' experiences and their reflections upon them. The appropriate next step, therefore, to develop the research project by examining a larger sample of videos, and by asking participants questions that would not only effectively bring forth their experiences in their own words, but would also enable them to reflect critically on those experiences

and their reactions to them. Such reflections would be useful to their peers who may be interested in homestays. The next stage of our research would also cover how students who watch the videos react, and reflect, on what they see and hear in participants' stories.

Our hope for the video project is that the student stories will provide various benefits over the longer-term, including:

- promoting English, culture, and communication across borders
- bringing greater awareness and understanding of foreign student presence on campus
- inculcating critical thinking
- breaking down stereotyping and misperceptions.

More specifically, we aim to fill what may be a gap in the existing literature between how university administrators conceive of the benefits and issues of overseas sojourns for their students, and what students themselves see as the benefits and issues. Even more importantly, we aim for the students themselves to:

- identify common problems among participants in homestay stints
- give crucial near peer advice for students interested in going abroad
- provide relevant input to administrators in program planning and student preparation up to departure
- serve as plausible and realistic testimonies as to the benefits of overseas study and homestay sojourns for fellow students.

Our initial foray into what we aim to make into a more extensive study has given us grounds to propose that recording participant stories of homestays abroad may help students to recast their experiences in a more positive and constructive light, as well as provide good role models for their peers who have not yet been abroad. Moreover, through discussions at the LD Forum at the

JALT2015 International Conference, we found that our video project, in which students shared their experiences and their feelings of adjusting to life abroad, resonated with other participants. This has strengthened our belief that the videos can become important tools for enabling students to communicate with their peers valuable advice about life and study abroad. We hope that they will thus contribute to an emergent sense of critical thinking and awareness about global orientation and identity among Japanese and foreign students alike.

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## Japanese University Students and Learning Management Systems

日本人大学生と学習管理システム

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### Abstract

While Learning Management Systems (LMSs) have become a common feature within education systems worldwide, their use in Japanese universities remains minimal. Despite recent government initiatives to incorporate ICT into the education system, many students have never even heard of an LMS by the time they matriculate, and they typically continue to remain highly paper and blackboard dependent in university. In this study I investigate how well 458 university students adapted to the use of a cloud-based LMS. I then go on to identify what factors affect their willingness-to-use, which was found to be an essential factor for successful adaption to LMS usage.

### 概要

学習管理システム (LMSs) は世界中の教育システムにおいて一般的に使用されている一方で、日本の大学での活用は最低限にとどまっている。教育システムへの ICT の導入という政府による近年の構想にもかかわらず、大学に入学するまでは LMS について聞いたことのない学生は多く、入学後も概して紙や黒板に頼り続けているのが現状である。本研究は 458 人の大学生を対象に、どの程度よくクラウドベースの LMS の使用に適応したかを検証する。加えて、LMS 導入を成功させるため不可欠な要素である、学生の LMS に対する使用意欲や積極性に影響する要因を特定していく。

**Keywords:** Learning Management System, Japan, university, ICT, willingness-to-use  
学習管理システム, 日本、大学、ICT、遣る気

### Introduction

ICT stands for information and communication technologies, which include computers, televisions, interactive screens, smartphones, the Internet, and so forth. This diverse set of tools and resources enables educators to create, manage, store, and disseminate information, and in so doing ICT has brought about significant changes in the educational processes. In the mid 2000s, the use of Learning Management Systems (LMSs), which do all of the above tasks, reached diffusion levels of approximately 95% in the tertiary education system in the United States of America and United Kingdom (Hawkins & Rudy, 2005; Browne, Jenkins, & Walker, 2006). In language education, instructors have also embraced LMSs as a means to improve the flow and efficacy of teaching and learning in and out

of the classroom. In Japan, however, LMS usage still lags noticeably behind despite it being a technologically advanced country.

In April 2010, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (hereinafter MEXT) established the “Conference on the Use of ICT in Primary and Secondary Education.” Working groups, which included leaders in the information technology and communications industry (notably Fujitsu), developed a comprehensive policy, titled “The Vision for ICT in Education” about the utilization of ICT in the education system towards the year 2020. Central aims of the vision are to digitize the learning environment both inside and outside the school system and develop students’ ICT literacy. The ultimate aim of this policy is to revitalize the economy and reverse Japan’s

slide in international competitiveness rankings since 1990 (MEXT, 2011).

In practice, however, many schools and universities remain highly paper dependent (e.g., all notices are invariably printed on paper; syllabuses and paper handouts are given out in class; homework is typically distributed and completed on paper; in-class drills are invariably done on paper, etc.) As a result, most Japanese students have never heard of or used an LMS by the time they matriculate.

What then is an LMS? The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2005) defines a Learning Management System (LMS) as a form of technology used by instructors to build and maintain courses. It is sometimes called a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). LMS usage dates back to the 1960s, but it became familiar to most educators following the creation of the Internet and the subsequent launch of Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (MOODLE). Moodle was developed as an Open Source software in 2002 to support learning based on social constructionist epistemology: In layman's terms this is where an "edgeless" community of instructor(s) and learner(s) co-operate in an asynchronous process to acquire and/or construct knowledge. While it is not entirely clear how social constructionism makes Moodle different from previous systems, some academic institutions have typically given this as a main reason for adopting it (Weller, 2006). Others, such as the large-scale user Open University in the United Kingdom, see the LMS as being a "relatively pedagogy-neutral" medium (Sclater, 2000). I understand this to mean that the LMS is a means of managing learning that is not solely determined and constructed by the instructor.

The main purpose of an LMS is to improve learning flow, creating a seamless or edgeless connection between school and home, and one that greatly reduces dependency on paper. Most LMSs enable teachers or students to do the following:

- Post course syllabuses, assignments, documents, lesson summaries, quizzes, tests, videos, web-links, images, etc.
- Evaluate and keep track of participation, types of error/misunderstanding, grades, progress, etc.
- Engage in synchronous and asynchronous teacher-student, teacher-class, student-student(s), and student-class communication via messages, discussion forums, and surveys.
- Assess assignments, as well as give and collect feedback.

As an educator, LMSs offer me a convenient means to manage many aspects of running a course, such as those outlined above. A notable advantage is that LMSs enable me to employ various forms of media when I create assignments for the students. Naturally, I cannot assume every student will share my enthusiasm. Thus, a simple hypothesis is that satisfied users are more likely to use LMSs to their benefit while frustrated users are more likely to resist usage. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how my students felt about using LMSs. More specifically, the focus question of this study was, "How well can Japanese university students adapt to blended learning (the combining of class-based and online learning) by way of using an LMS?" This question is important because research to date in Japan has mainly focused on innovation in the use of LMSs from the teacher end as opposed to actual use by students (see Hinkelman & Grose, 2005; Baskerville & Robb, 2005; Nozawa, 2006; Nozawa, 2007; Stanley, 2007; Brine, Wilson, & Roy, 2007; Bateson, 2008; Bateson, 2009; Nozawa, 2011; Hirschel, 2012).

### Criteria for LMS Usage

Selim (2007) identifies four interrelated categories that affect student satisfaction with an LMS: (a) university support, (b) lecturer, (c) student, and (d) information technology. I will use these categories to present the relevant research.

### University Support

Czerniewicz and Brown (2009) and Naveh, Tubin, and Pliskin (2010) argue that affirmative university policies that advance LMS usage within the institution often heighten student satisfaction. Such policies include: staff and students' ease of access to computer laboratories, ICT support, sufficient network bandwidth, network reliability and security, videoconferencing facilities, instructional multimedia services, as well as the quality of the university's IT educational provisions. Staples and Seddon (2004) argue, moreover, social norms also affect LMS acceptance when LMS usage is mandatory. Conversely, however, Weaver, Spratt, and Nair's (2008) study found that university-wide mandates can in fact make the experience of an LMS less satisfactory for students. In such situations, teaching staff who feel obligated to use the LMS but lack suitable training are more apt to resent its usage and cannot provide students with the necessary technological support, thereby creating an unsupportive LMS usage environment.

### Lecturers

In Thailand, Wichadee (2014) highlights the need for teaching staff to explain to the students the benefits of using an LMS at the outset. In the United Arab Emirates, Selim's (2007) research reveals that students whose lecturers promoted task-based activities or interaction on the LMS, adapted better than those who did not. In Japan, Nozawa (2011), employing a task based approach, explored the use of Moodle as a means for 24 students to learn how to search for information on the Internet, and then collaborate, research, present, and peer-evaluate various topics. While 71% of the cohort enjoyed blended-learning, he notes 71% found Moodle's interface difficult to use (i.e., students found it difficult to do quizzes or answer surveys). Nozawa attributes their difficulties to their ICT inexperience despite widespread use of smartphones and the Internet among the Japanese student population.

### Students

A key factor in students' satisfaction with LMS is their awareness of how it will contribute to their academic learning, especially with respect to collaborative learning (Delone & McLean, 2003; Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen, & Yeh, 2008; Seddon, Staples, Patnayakuni, & Bowtell, 2010). However, Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich (2007) found that while collaborative LMS environments often result in higher levels of learner-learner and learner-system interaction, students still place greater value on learner-instructor interaction. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, Hornik, Johnson, and Wu (2007) observe that when there is a gap between students' preferred learning approach and the promotion of collaborative LMS learning, students will be less willing to use the LMS. Lastly, while researchers often seek to show how the use of LMSs result in improvements in "academic performance," a study by McGill and Klobas (2009) revealed the students' most immediate concern was ease in use rather than obtaining a high grade.

### Information Technology

The question of ease-of-use brings us to matters of computer access and ICT literacy. Following the emergence of mobile devices, such as the smartphone and tablet, concerns about access are notably reduced but a number of studies point to continued problems concerning ICT literacy. Hong (2002), Selim (2007), and Liaw (2008) highlight the importance of the students' level of ICT literacy for the successful implementation of an LMS. In Saudi Arabia, Al-Jarf (2009) attributes marked dissatisfaction among freshman students using several LMSs on an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) grammar course to their low-level computer skills and low-level English proficiency. In this study, the LMS content included explanations, examples, exercises, and a discussion forum. Students were also required to post short paragraphs on any topic of their choice. Despite the simplicity of the tasks, the students complained that the LMSs were difficult to use and time-consuming. Al-Jarf notes:



Many students did not take online instruction seriously as it was not used by other instructors and students. They also believed that online courses should be used for fun and not for credits and serious studying. (2009, p. 6)

In Oman, Al-Naddabi (2007) also attributes students' unwillingness to participate in Moodle activities to low computer literacy levels among the staff and students. In Japan, Miyazoe (2008), comparing usage of Blackboard Academic Suite 7.1 and Moodle 1.7.2, found students adapted fairly well to blended learning, but they preferred Moodle on account of its messaging facilities. Conversely, Kato's (2011) study, involving a larger cohort of 92 English Department students, found most students found it difficult to use an LMS, although he did not attempt to identify why this was the case.

At the other end of the computer literacy continuum, Naveh et al. (2010) observe that computer-literate students are typically quick to express dissatisfaction when their expectations for a high-quality, modern-looking, and user-friendly LMS interface are not met.

### Relevance of Previous Studies

The above criteria provide a framework with which to look at how students at Fukuoka University might adapt to use of an LMS. In the following sections, I will provide an overview of the university's support for blended learning and my own approach before going on to describe the survey that I conducted to investigate their views on LMS use. It is important to note here that some of the studies above show successful implementation in a university setting. Others, however, highlight the fact that there have been problems implementing LMSs. In that, students do not always adapt well to blended learning. The authors, however, have not investigated the reasons.

### Background

Fukuoka University is a large private university in Kyushu where I have been

teaching for the past three years in a full-time capacity. It has a student population of just over 23,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students. Most students come from the Kyushu area, and the foreign student population is minimal and, for the most part, segregated from the Japanese student population. Nearly all students at the university matriculate at 18-19 years of age. Most students arrive at the university already familiar with a number of computing devices, and they are noticeably dependent on their smartphones. Nearly all the students carry these smartphones to class. In contrast to my experiences of studying and teaching in European and North American university settings where tablet usage is a norm, very few students in Fukuoka University bring tablets or laptops to class.

The learning culture in the university is predominantly traditional which is reflected in the physical environment (i.e., classrooms with rows of desks facing blackboards) and the curricular framework (e.g., courses with final tests that carry heavy grade weightings). In contrast with my teaching and learning experiences in tertiary education in American and British universities, ICT equipment is notably dated. A large number of the language teaching staff are still using VHS tapes and cassette tapes for their visual and audio needs, and technological renovations in the classrooms continue to cater to these needs by installing VHS players and cassette players in new "multimedia centers" lodged in the podiums. There are around 10 CALL classrooms but even the newest classroom, which has a very good grouped seating arrangement, has no facilities to monitor students' tablets or even send/collect files to them. Furthermore, WiFi provision in the buildings is for the most part unstable.

In regard to LMS usage, Fukuoka University implemented Moodle as an institution-wide LMS in 2009. Despite the fact Moodle costs Fukuoka University approximately 1 million yen (around 8,500 USD) for yearly server maintenance costs, actual staff usage—the total number of which is approximately 4000—is exceedingly minimal. This is probably related to two

factors. The first is usage is voluntary, and people tend to resist change. The second is the fact that the frequency and quality of Moodle training is poor. At the time of writing, only two three-hour training sessions had been held since 2009, and the training session gave participants very little in the way of hands-on experience and neglected to teach participants how to enroll students in the system. Other factors, such as having to apply well in advance to use the system or add-on-tools probably hindered interest too. As a result, paper usage and wastage at the university remains significantly high. As a rough calculation, paper and printing costs on A4-sized paper alone per foreign language lecturer amount to approximately 190,000 yen each fiscal year. Times this figure by 4,000 and we can see how costly the use of paper is for the university and for the environment.

### Methodology

I used a cloud-based LMS called Coursebase (formerly known as LanguageCloud) for four reasons. Firstly, the university's lengthy application procedure to use Moodle could be bypassed. Second, the interface has English and Japanese language settings that can be changed easily by users. Thirdly, the interface of Coursebase is notably simpler than most LMSs. Fourthly, I was an experienced user of the LMS.

I used Coursebase in four different courses that I teach: (a) Reading & Listening Course, (b) TOEIC (Speaking & Writing) English for Specific Purposes Course, (c) Interactive English Course, and (d) Advanced Interactive English Course. Students were required to attend a 90-minute class for face-to-face instruction in a whole-class setting 15 times a term. The 15 classes across the term included whole-class, individual, and collaborative learning activities. LMS registration and induction of the students took place in the first class. I outlined the potential benefits of using an LMS and the students were given an opportunity to discuss these and ask questions only a few students were forthcoming. As a result, I outlined the potential benefits of using an LMS. I then

showed students how to:

- Create a username and password
- Change user settings
- Access course information
- Use the messaging service
- Open/submit assignments
- Check assignment grades
- Contact the lecturer and the LMS support service.

There is no in-built facility for peer-collaboration and assessment in this LMS interface. Since my primary aim for this study was to explore students' adaption to using the LMS, I only used Coursebase to deliver assignments to the students outside class. Asynchronous course material was delivered through Coursebase, and its content was created in accordance with the aims of the course. Close-ended tasks (e.g., multiple choice questions) were marked automatically by the LMS and open-ended tasks (e.g., written text) were marked manually using the LMS's coding system and open fields for written feedback. There was no facility in the interface, however, for students to respond to feedback directly on the assignment page.

The following briefly outlines the aims of each course, and how the students in each of the four courses used the Coursebase LMS outside the class during the term. I have used the university's labeling system:

### Reading and Listening Course [R&L] (Mandatory Course – Department of Economics)

The aim of the course is to improve the students' reading comprehension skills and top-down listening skills. On the LMS, students had to choose and complete 10 out of 20 reading assignments, which I had written or adapted from various sources, constituting 50% of the course grade. For each, students were given closed multiple-choice or true-false items designed to both assist and assess reading comprehension, and one question-prompted open-ended item for a written response (one paragraph of at least five sentences).

### **TOEIC (Speaking & Writing) English for Special Purposes [ESP]** (*Mandatory Course – Department of Pharmacy*)

The aim of this course is to familiarize students with the Speaking and Writing Test of Test of English for International Communication, and prepare them to attain a good score. Students had to complete six outside class assignments constituting 35% of the course (5 assignments at 5%/ 1 assignment at 10%). Close-ended activities included word and meaning matching; cloze sentences; identifying sentences as being grammatically correct or incorrect; and multiple-choice items. Open-ended items included sentence writing; paragraph writing; business email writing; and five-paragraph essay writing.

### **Interactive English [IA]** (*Mandatory Course – Departments of Sports*)

The aim of the course was to raise students' awareness of what is entailed in communication and improve their spoken proficiency. Students had to complete 10 assignments constituting 50% of the course grade. Assignment items included reviews of language and communication strategies used in the class. Close-ended activities included grammar and vocabulary multiple choice and matching. Open-ended assignment items included writing conversations (or uploading audio/video conversation).

### **Advanced Interactive English [IA]** (*Elective Course – Department of Humanities*)

As above, the aims of this course were to develop awareness and communicative competency in English. Students had to complete six outside class assignments constituting 30% of the course grade. Items varied, but they were mostly open-ended items requiring students to provide written responses.

### **Methods**

Data were collected via an anonymous Japanese survey instrument administered to 473 undergraduate university students in the first and second semester of 2013.

The student survey comprised of 30

quantitative items organised into the following sections sections.

1. Categorization of the respondents in terms of their department and course.
2. Categorization of the students' IT education, keyboard skills, and previous LMS experience.
3. Categorization of the students' proficiency in using the LMS' functions.
4. Categorization of students' perceptions regarding the LMS's overall ease-of-use, its usefulness, and their willingness-to-use.

Sections 1-3 used Yes/No options. Section 4 used a five-point Likert scale. Finally, a section was included for students to share their views freely.

The frequencies of the responses made for each nominal or ordinal level survey question were tabulated, and expressed as percentages. The internal consistency of each item in each scale was then assessed using Cronbach's alpha values. The internal consistency was found to be satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha > 0.7) bar items concerning their willingness to use an LMS. Furthermore, the Item Characteristics Curves (ICC) for all the Items, except Q20, revealed that the transitions between all five response options are clear since most students with low to average perception score chose "Strongly disagree," "Disagree," or "Not sure," and those with the highest perception levels mostly chose "Agree" or "Strongly agree" with the positive statements on LMS.

Scores were then computed for the scale using a factor analysis approach. These scores were then used as the responses instead of the individual items in the scale. The effects of the explanatory variables on the scores were then assessed using multiple linear regressions. These and the ordinal scale responses were assessed using ordinal logistic regression.

The multivariable ordinal logistic regressions excluded the students' major and type of English course because this led to problems where there was complete separation or perfect prediction. The "major"



variable had many categories some of which had very few subjects. Missing values affected the estimation of the coefficients. Consequently, to assess the effect of English course on the response variables of interest, a univariate model involving only the English course as an explanatory variable was used.

## Findings

All students participated voluntarily in the study, and N=458 respondents completed the survey. Gender was not used to categorize respondents. The student ages ranged from 18 to 20, with a mean age of 19.2 years; 64.9% were in their first year; 64.6% were Humanities students and 35.4% were Science students. The majority (53.3%) were enrolled in an ESP course, 32.8% in R&L, and 13.8% in both the IA courses.

As shown in Tables 1 and 2 further below, at the beginning of the term, approximately 65% found it difficult to use the LMS. By the term end, around 30% still found it difficult. For example, they still did not know how to insert web links, photos, or videos, nor did they know how to change their settings or post a message. In response to the item *I do not want to use the LMS in my other language courses*, approximately 30% confirmed this to be the case. Another 30% wanted to use an LMS and the remaining 40% were undecided. In regard to the item, *I wish my other courses (conducted in Japanese) in my department used the LMS*, only 20% responded favourably. The majority, about 60%, affirmed that they would rather have paper information and do paper assignments. Conversely, 20% responded that they did not want paper based information and assignments.

Attending the LMS induction was found to have a direct and significant effect upon students' willingness to access the LMS. During the course, however, students typically sought advice from their friends

about the LMS rather than approach me. Receiving an IT education at junior high school and high school was found to have a significant effect on LMS usage. It was noteworthy that only 77.1% of the students had in fact received some sort of IT education. Rather surprisingly, the fact that only 10.5% felt they could use a keyboard with ease suggests that their actual use of computers during those school years was, in fact, minimal.

**Table 1.** Number and percent of students who answered 'Yes' to questions on computer literacy and knowledge.

Survey question	Yes - n	%
<b>Computer literacy:</b>		
This is the first time I have used an LMS.	440	96.1
I mostly use my smartphone to access the LMS.	334	72.9
I also use a home computer to access the LMS.	236	51.5
I learnt how to use a computer/internet at elementary school.	350	77.1
I learnt how to use computer/internet classes at junior & high school.	356	77.7
I like using computers.	236	51.5
I can type fairly quickly on a computer keyboard.	48	10.5
<b>Getting started:</b>		
My lecturer helped me get started on the LMS.	422	92.1
I worked out how to use the LMS by myself.	136	29.7
When I needed help, I asked other students to show me how to use the LMS.	336	73.4
When I needed help, I consulted the LMS support staff.	38	8.3
When I needed help, I asked my lecturer to show me how to use the LMS.	150	32.0
<b>I now know how to:</b>		
Change my settings (password, email, language, etc).	334	73.2
Post a message to the class.	356	77.7
Post a message to individuals in the class.	196	43.0
Open, save, and submit assignments.	444	97.8
Insert photos/web links/ and attach documents in messages or assignments.	182	39.9
Check my grade.	348	76.3
Find information about the course syllabus, assessment, etc.	384	84.2

It must be noted here that while some keyboards have keys with assigned hiragana symbols, Japanese users typically use the Roman alphabet keys to write Japanese, which then appears on the screen as written Japanese. Being able to use a keyboard with ease also had a direct effect upon being willing to use the LMS. Naturally, those who could not type with ease preferred paper

information and assignments. Lastly, students taking the ESP course, which is focused solely upon taking TOEIC, were far less likely to want paper information and assignments. This was found to correlate with their computer literacy.

**Table 2.** Response to questions on LSM usability.

Survey question	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Not Sure n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)
At first, I had major difficulties using the LMS	34 (7.5)	86 (19.0)	40 (8.8)	196 (43.4)	96 (21.2)
Overall, it is now easy for me to use the LMS website.	44 (9.7)	94 (20.8)	96 (21.2)	190 (42.0)	28 (6.2)
The LMS website contributed to the course.	14 (3.1)	20 (4.5)	160 (35.7)	210 (46.9)	44 (9.8)
I am satisfied with the course materials posted on the LMS website.	12 (2.7)	22 (4.9)	170 (37.9)	206 (46)	36 (8.5)
I do not want to use the LMS in my other language courses.	22 (4.9)	106 (23.6)	186 (41.3)	94 (20.9)	42 (9.3)
I wish my other courses in my department used the LMS.	58 (12.9)	110 (24.4)	194 (43.1)	74 (16.4)	14 (3.1)
If the LMS had online guidance, I would use it.	36 (8.0)	90 (19.9)	228 (50.4)	90 (19.9)	8 (1.8)
I often accessed the LMS.	32 (7.1)	170 (37.6)	86 (19.0)	154 (34.1)	10 (2.2)
I would rather do paper assignments and have paper information.	20 (4.4)	88 (19.5)	120 (26.5)	134 (29.6)	90 (19.9)
I checked the lecturer's feedback/comments on my assignments.	26 (5.8)	56 (12.4)	100 (22.1)	192 (42.5)	78 (17.3)
I had to study English more outside the class because of the LMS.	74 (16.4)	120 (26.5)	156 (34.5)	88 (19.5)	14 (3.1)

## Discussion

How well did the students in this study adapt to use of an LMS? Looking at the overall picture, it can be said that only a minority adapted well to its use in blended learning. What then is impeding a transition to digitalized learning? A primary factor would appear to be the students' ICT literacy. Around 25% claimed they had never received any ICT education since elementary school, which is a surprising and worrying statistic in this day and age. This finding is in line with studies in other contexts (see Hong (2002); Selim (2007); Liaw (2008); Al-Jarf (2009)).

Another finding in the research is that many students—especially those who had never received an ICT education—accessed the LMS via their smartphones. While some students commented on the convenience of being able to use a smartphone, much more complained it was difficult to see the LMS due to a small screen size and the difficulties of typing on a phone. In addition, the timed web security facility, smartphone screen interface glitches, and weak Internet connections made mobile access to the LMS a much more time-consuming chore for students than paper-based information and assignments. Thus, we can say these technical

considerations are just as important as an easy-to-navigate LMS interface. However, the fact that these students chose not to use a computer when confronted with these problems can be attributed to either paucity in their computer education or their

unwillingness to use the LMS.

While discussion was conducted in class as to the need for ICT skills in the labour market, many students appeared to resist the need to become more proficient.

However, it is important to note that the TOEIC

(ESP) students were most in favour of using an LMS. There are possible three reasons for their willingness-to-use. The first is that students in this class did see an obvious relationship between ICT usage in education and future ICT usage in the job market. The second is that they are more computer literate. Thirdly, and this information is anecdotal, these students are more scholastically adept than their counterparts on the R&L and IA courses, as the matriculation requirements for these students (Department of Pharmacy) are far more rigorous than for students who entered the Departments of Sports, Economics, and Humanities. Furthermore, despite the class being much larger in size, the TOEIC (ESP) students were notably more attentive to how they should behave in a classroom setting and actively sought to make the learning experience worthwhile.

Some readers might say that test focused courses, such as TOEIC, lend themselves more easily to motivating students and LMS usage. While it is true that TOEIC (Reading and Listening) is a widely known high-stakes test in Japan, TOEIC (Speaking and Writing) is a new test that is not widely known and currently lacks status. It is true that the

former, as a receptive test, does lend itself well to close-ended item content creation on an LMS. The latter, however, places a distinct focus on productive language skills, thereby requiring the use of open-ended items. In this sense, it is more challenging.

The final point that I wish to highlight here is that LMSs are sometimes seen as a solution to the apathy often seen among academically low-level students in many foreign language courses in Japan. However, I believe this view should be treated with some caution. There are five primary concerns. First is their previous ICT education and ICT literacy level. Second is the students' preferred form of access. Third is the nature of the LMS interface itself. Fourth is the nature of the LMS content. Fifth is the nature of the educational culture. As I have noted above, two key factors in the successful implementation of an LMS are the degree to which the university sets up an environment that supports and encourages LMS implementation. This is not to say that LMSs should be avoided when the university is not supportive but their integration needs to be thought out all the more deeply before implementation.

Until then, however, it is likely that students who wish to remain paper-dependent will voice their objections to the digitization of education on teacher evaluations due to their lack of familiarity, proficiency, and capability. This was certainly my experience at the university. Student resistance could impede the diffusion of LMS usage in Japan generally, as many teachers, especially those on part-time contracts, tend to adapt their teaching in order to solicit positive reviews from their students, whether or not the educational practice is in the students' short- and long-term best interests. Therefore, it may well be in teachers' interests to make a collective effort to introduce an LMS in their department. This raises a question for further research as to whether students will adapt better in an environment where there is a collective effort.

To conclude, this study fills a gap in literature to date by not only presenting a wider-scale investigation of Japanese

university students' ability to adapt to the use of an LMS in their language education, but also by identifying key reasons as to why a good number of net generation students remain averse to its usage. Thus, while the use of ICT in language education has come of age in many parts of the world, Japanese universities still need to consider more carefully what skills and knowledge their students need to acquire in order to use an LMS on their courses more effectively. This is a necessary step before other innovative approaches in edgeless education can be approached. Until then, paper usage/wastage at Japanese universities is likely to remain unnecessarily high.

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## Appendix

### Translation of the Original Questionnaire Survey Questions

#### Computer literacy:

1. This is the first time I have used an LMS.
2. I mostly use my smartphone to access the LMS.
3. I also use a home computer to access the LMS.
4. I learnt how to use a computer/internet at elementary school.
5. I learnt how to use computer/internet classes at junior & high school.
6. I like using computers.
7. I can type with ease on a computer keyboard.

#### Getting started:

8. My lecturer helped me get started on the LMS.
9. I worked out how to use LMS by myself.
10. When I needed help, I asked other students to show me how to use the LMS.
11. When I needed help, I consulted the LMS support staff.
12. When I needed help, I asked my lecturer to show me how to use the LMS.

#### I now know how to:

13. Change my settings (password, email, language, etc).
14. Post a message to the class.
15. Post a message to individuals in the class.
16. Open, save, and submit assignments.
17. Insert photos/web links/ and attach documents in messages or assignments.
18. Check my grade
19. Find information about the course syllabus, assessment, etc.
20. At first, I had major difficulties using the LMS
21. Overall, it is now easy for me to use the LMS website.
22. The LMS website contributed to the course.
23. I am satisfied with the course materials posted on the LMS website.
24. I do not want to use the LMS in my other language courses.
25. I wish my other courses in my department used the LMS.

26. If the LMS had online guidance, I would use it.

27. I often accessed the LMS.

28. I would rather do paper assignments and have information on paper.

29. I checked the lecturer's feedback/comments on my assignments.

30. I had to study English more outside the class because of the LMS

## Exploring Representations of New Gender Roles in Japanese Animations

日本のアニメーションにおける新しいジェンダーロールの表象研究

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### Abstract

This article focuses on new images of male characters in Japanese animations known as *soushokukei-danshi* (or *herbivorous boys*) and explores the changing gender roles that these new characters embody. Men who are categorized as *soushokukei-danshi* appear weak, both physically and mentally, and are quite different from conventional male stereotypes. In that gender is not inherent but rather is performed, an analysis of *soushokukei-danshi* can help us understand how we are pushed to behave in certain ways by social power and how we perform gender roles unconsciously. This analysis can enable teachers to see their students in new ways and make better learning environments for them. Understanding the creation and reproduction of gender diversity in Japanese animations can thus help teachers recognize a greater diversity of gender performances among the students they teach.

### 要旨

この論文では、草食系男子とされる日本アニメのキャラクターから見る新しい「男らしさ」に注目する。そして、それらのキャラクターによって具現化されたジェンダーの変容を分析していく。草食系男子に分類される男性は身体的にも精神的にもよわい。つまり、ステレオタイプタイプの肉食系男子とはかけ離れた男性のことである。ジェンダーは生まれつき持っているものではなく、パフォーマンスである。この草食系男子の分析は、私たちがどれくらい社会的・文化的な力に影響を受けジェンダーを作り上げていくか、そしてどれくらい無意識にジェンダーを演じているのかを、理解する手助けをするだろう。この分析によって、教員は生徒を新しい観点から見るができるだろう。そして彼らにとってより良い学習環境を作ることができるだろう。日本のアニメーション作品におけるジェンダーの多様性を理解することは、生徒内のジェンダーの多様性を理解するのに役立つだろう。

**Key words:** masculinity, gender, representation, Japanese animations, herbivorous boys

日本のアニメ、草食系男子、男性性、ジェンダー、表象分析

### Introduction

In my presentation at the Creating Community: Learning Together 2 conference, I focused on new images of male characters in Japanese animations. Recently, some Japanese young men have been categorized as *soushokukei-danshi*. This means *herbivorous boys* in English. Men who are categorized like this appear weak, both physically and mentally. Also their character is far from the traditional male stereotype—namely that men should earn money to provide for their family. Before the 2000s, these traditional

male images were dominant, so almost all Japanese animation characters looked like that. For example, Son Goku in *Dragon Ball* (1984) and Hyuma Hoshi in *Kyojin no Hoshi* (1986) look energetic and have strongly muscled bodies. At the same time, some kinds of *soushokukei-danshi* boys also appeared, but they were not as popular as traditional male characters and were never depicted as main characters. However, with the publication of *Evangelion* (1990), *soushokukei-danshi* boys suddenly became popular as heroes. This animation's main

character, Shinji Ikari is a soushokukei-danshi boy. After this animation, many other soushokukei-danshi characters appeared and became popular.

When I studied about gender in my seminar last year, I started wondering why these images had changed in animations and how gender roles come to change generally. Through my reading, I learned that these changes are related to the images that mass media give us. So, for my graduation thesis, I researched soushokukei-danshi in Japanese animations from the perspective of representation and gender performativity. My main questions were about new gender performance and how male gender roles have changed and are changing. By sharing my research here, I hope the ideas I discuss will help teachers think about gender issues and become more aware of gender identity among students.

### Gender Performance

When we think about gender, we label people as male, female, and transgender, and when we think about sex we use labels like LGBTQ. In giving these labels, we are convinced that these gender roles are natural. However, Judith Butler, a leading expert on feminism, claims gender is created by behavior. If a behavior is enacted repeatedly, it becomes “natural” for us. That is, gender is not present or inherent, but is a performance.

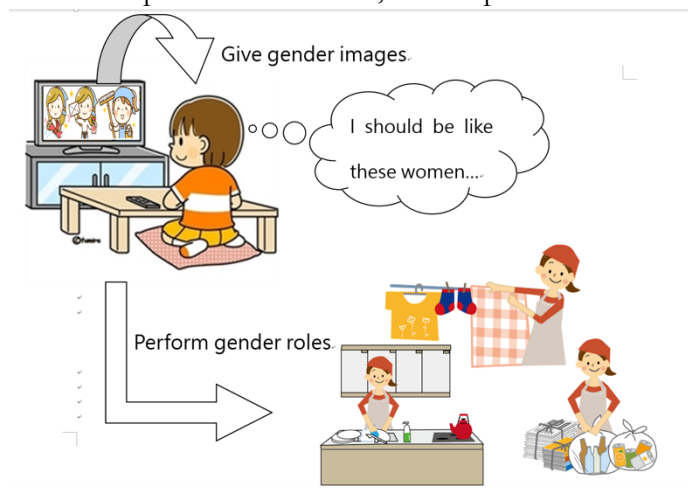


Figure 1. Gender Performativity (Author's Representation).

It is constructed by society and culture and we are pushed to behave in certain ways by social power (Salih, 2003, p. 113). For

example, a TV commercial shows a wife cleaning her family's clothes in the middle of the day. The woman in this commercial represents an image of a “traditional wife”. That is, women have to do housework and they are supposed to stay inside the home.

In another commercial, a man is shown coming back at night to his home where the dinner is on the table ready for him. He sees a letter written by his wife. He reads it and thinks, “I will work hard tomorrow also.” The man in this commercial represents the “traditional male” image. That is, men should work for their family and should always be strong. We see these images created by the mass media again and again in our lives and we construct our gender roles accordingly, consciously or unconsciously. So, we perform being a “man” or “woman” using the roles that are given to us by these media. Soushokukei-danshi are also a sort of gender role that is created by behavior that is promoted by society and culture. They represent a new kind of role for men, and this depiction allows new ways of performing masculinity for young men in Japanese society.

### Representations of New Gender Roles

In the Japanese animations of the 2000s, we can find many soushokukei-danshi characters. In the three animations that I focus on in this short article various types of attractive characters are represented. As I will show here, they may both reflect and provide role models for new ways of performing being a boy in actual life. That is, soushokukei-danshi in animation provide new gender roles for today's society.

I will continue by looking at the main soushokukei-danshi character in each of the three animations. The first one is *Konjiki no Gash Bell*, which was published in 2003. The main character is Kiyomaro Takamine, a soushokukei-danshi boy. He is an intelligent high school student, but he is a usually timid and negative.

One day he meets a strange boy called Gash Bell. He and Gash Bell overcome their enemies who tend to be traditional types, “strong male” as well as the less traditional





Figure 2. Kiyomaro Takamine:  
Soushokukei-Danishi Boy (Makoto Raiku,  
2003).

“strong girl,” to become the kings of hell. In this animation, Takamine acts as a new kind of animation hero. Before the 1990s the main characters in animations such as *Son Goku* (*Dragon Ball*) had powerful bodies and strong minds from the very first story. However, Takamine does not have a powerful body and does not have a strong mind. He looks thin and is far from powerful physically. In the first of the stories he always thinks in a negative way, saying things to himself like, “I cannot beat him” or “I cannot make friends.” At the end of the story, his character changes a little, but his looks and his character never become like the traditional male stereotype. In other words, his character grows, but he does not change his gender performance.



Figure 3. Eyeshield 21: Sena Kobayakawa (Riichiro Inagaki/  
Yusuke Murata, 2005).

*Eyeshield 21*, which was published in 2005, is a sports animation. Ordinarily, sports animations’ main characters are energetic and they have muscular bodies. However, Sena Kobayakawa, the main character in this animation, looks thin and small like a girl and he has a negative attitude about everything. However, he has one outstanding sports ability, and that is he can run fast. Because of this skill, he joins the American football team at his school, and he fights against other teams to go to the “Christmas Ball.”



Figure 4. Hyo-ka: Hotaro Oreki (Honobu Yonezawa, 2013).

Using his talent, Sena challenges various characters who represent conventional gender stereotypes. Playing the game, Sena fights with many traditional male characters and defeats them. In this animation gender diversity is promoted. Usually, we imagine American football players as stereotypes. That is, a player has a muscular body and thinks, “a man has to be strong any time” or “a man must not cry,” but in this animation many characters that have new gender roles are depicted. Soushokukei-danishi boys in this animation look like traditional males, but they do not behave like traditional males. Before the 1990s, these kinds of soushokukei-danishi boys were usually minor characters and they always only supported traditional characters. However, in the different stories of this animation, almost all the characters are the main characters. So, this animation represents gender diversity.

The last animation is *Hyo-ka*. This work was released in 2013 and is based on the novel of the same title. The main character,

Hotaro Oreki, is a high school student who is a member of the classical literature club. One of his characteristics is that he doesn't like moving more than necessary.

In the story he and his club members spend their school life solving mysteries that happen around them like a robbery, the true character of a ghost, and the secret of the school. Hotaro Oreki doesn't have a special talent like Sena or Takamine or Gash. He is just an average boy. Oreki represents the new stereotype of a boy who is not energetic or masculine. Oreki's attitude and behavior are close to how many young male people behave today.

### Discussion

The main characters in these animations have some common points. They are different from older ones. These images represent new types of gender roles. That is, they are not bound by traditional male images. Sara Kuon, the psychologist, has noted that young people nowadays cry easily. They sometimes cry in front of their boss. The men who conform to traditional male images would not do this because of the gender role assigned to them by society (Kuon, 2011, p. 19). However, soushokukei-danshi boys have different gender roles and behave differently. In the three animations, there are some scenes where the main characters start to cry. Sara also claims that youth have become very passive (Kuon, 2011, p. 19). This image of passivity is also represented in these three animations. Finally, the audience can empathize with these characters because these animations are made for youth and young people are near to these characters. Because of this, the authors of these animations popularize new gender images of men crying in public and not doing more than necessary.

There are other reasons for the increase of soushokukei-danshi in recent Japanese animations. One of these is the appearance of "strong girls." Some girls bravely save the main characters. Others fight to make their dreams come true. They represent woman's social advancement. These animation characters break down the

stereotype of "weak and passive woman." Before 1990, very few girl characters were strong. They always performed a support role for the main male characters. However, *Evangelion* (1995) introduced two female characters, Ritsuko Akagi and Misato Katsuragi, who showed new gender images where "strong woman" is performed. These strong woman characters have a high position in their communities. They also direct other people to achieve goals, and in many cases they get a position near traditional male position. After them, strong girl characters became popular in animations. The increase of soushokukei-danshi characters happened at almost the same time. So it was interesting for me to examine how men's roles and women's roles are related. Similarly, it may also be interesting for readers of *Learning Learning* to consider differences of students' motivation to learn, the different actions that students take in some group works, and the different attitudes that individual students have for teachers in terms of gender roles.

Finally, I want to point out that there is more diversity in the present-day Japanese animations. As I said, both boys and girls are now represented in a new way. Before the 1990s, traditional strong boys and weak girls were "natural", but they are not so now. The "energetic man" took the hero role 30 years ago, but now the soushokukei-danshi boys present a different major role for young generations. So, the traditional man has become out of date.

In this short article, I presented some animations to explore the rise of soushokukei-danshi in Japanese animations. It is worthwhile looking at animations because the audience is largely young people, so they are influenced by those soushokukei-danshi characters and may unconsciously adopt the kinds of roles that are depicted. In particular I analyzed the image of soushokukei-danshi boys. They are typical of the new masculinity. Gender is created by culture. As culture changes, so gender changes. In the near future, soushokukei-danshi, today's new gender role, will in turn transform into other gender roles.

### Future Research Directions

In the Creating Community/Learning Together conference, I received some questions and was also given some advice about the theme that I presented. One student asked, “Strong women are increasing, on the other hand, strong men are despairing. So why can’t the strong girls and the strong boys live together?” One possible response to this question is that they already do live together but we young people are not aware of this. Mass media always focuses on prejudiced images. Since we see those images repeatedly, we become convinced that the images that the mass media reproduce are real. In response to this question, I can only say the culture is changing so now we can feel the strong women are popular. More specifically, I said traditional male (strong man) is out of date, but in the near future they may become popular again. Another question I was asked was, “What do you think about doing some kind of survey?” This advice was impressive for me. My research focuses on only animations so I cannot know what the audience really thinks about these gender roles. If I do some survey research, I may see a new perspective, so I want to include the results of a survey in the future.

While I was researching my study, I also had some questions. My first question was, “Do Japanese animations influence readers in other countries?” Today, Japanese animations are read by many people outside Japan. As I said, animation images are related to our performance of gender roles. Soushokukei-danshi boys are popular in Japan, but is it also the case that animations may give the new gender images to people in other countries? In many ways Japanese culture and foreign culture are different. Do other cultures make new gender images that include Japanese gender images—or do they refuse to do so? I

cannot imagine how gender images work in other countries so I also wanted to research this. My second question was “How can this research be included in education?” As I mentioned earlier, animations’ audience consists of young boys and girls, so it is possible that students in school and university can become aware of gender roles through their reading. If teachers and students understand and adapt to new roles, some students may find it easier to stay in school. Recently, some teachers don’t accept new gender roles. They always believe that their view of gender roles is correct and any other gender role must be wrong, but this is not good for making a better learning environment. Understanding gender diversity could thus make better learning environments.

In conclusion, at the conference I could talk about, consider, and discuss many interesting puzzles and questions. If I hadn’t taken part, I could not have found such puzzles and questions. In the future, I will use this experience to develop my research further and write my graduate thesis on sushokukei-danshi boys.

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## Raising Global/Glocal Awareness in L2 Writing through Photojournalistic Images

フォトジャーナリスト的なイメージを通した L2 ライティングにおける  
グローバル・グローカル意識の向上

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### Abstract

Although using imagery is a common pedagogic strategy, research into the use of different types of imagery in the L2 writing classroom has been limited. Photojournalistic imagery provides an especially rich and powerful source of meaning and content and may form compelling material to explore global-glocal themes for productive composition. The account presented in this article explores the use of photojournalistic imagery around refugee issues in a first-year writing course at a private university. Learners were asked to choose from a set of photojournalistic images about refugees and to imagine themselves either as refugees bound for resettlement in Japan, or as individuals who specialize in working with refugees. The article details how the students then completed a sequence of guided writing tasks to explore the vulnerable situations that refugees find themselves and the life-changing and often traumatic experiences that they go through. Examples of the writing that the students produced about the lives of refugees reveal the powerfully empathetic and moving interpretations that the students made. This approach thus underlines the potential of using photojournalistic images for raising students' L2 global-glocal awareness in their L2 writing.

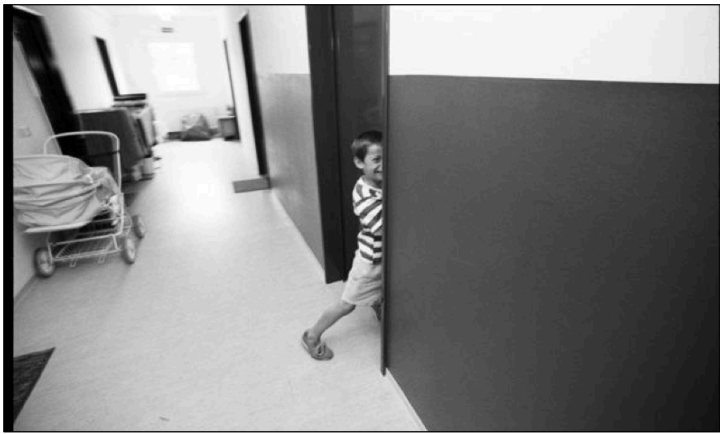
### 要旨

イメージは教育上よく用いられるストラテジーだが、L2 ライティング授業での種類の異なるイメージ使用に関する研究は限られている。フォトジャーナリスト的なイメージは意味や内容に関するとりわけ豊富で強力なソースを提供し、内容のある文章作成のためのグローバル・グローカルなテーマ探しにおける、説得力のある題材になるであろう。本稿では、私立大学 1 年生のライティング授業での難民に関するフォトジャーナリスト的なイメージ使用に関して論じる。学生には難民に関するフォトジャーナリスト的なイメージセットから選ばせ、日本に再定住する難民もしくは専門的に難民との活動を行う人物のいずれかとして自身を想像するように求めた。本論では、難民たちの弱い立場、人生を変えるような経験や多くの場合トラウマ的な経験を考察させる一連のライティングタスクを、学生がどのように完成させたかを詳細に提示する。難民生活に関する学生のライティング例からは大変共感的で心を打つような解釈が示され、L2 ライティングにおける学生の L2 グローバル・グローカルな気付きを高めるフォトジャーナリスト的なイメージ使用の可能性を明示している。

### Key words

imagery, photojournalism, Global-Glocal awareness, L2 writing, empathy イメージ、フォトジャーナリズム、グローバル・グローカルな気付き、L2 ライティング、共感





**Figure 1.** Asylbewerber in einer Sammelunterkunft in Gauting (Bayern, Deutschland)/Asylum seeker in shared accommodation in Gauting (Bavaria, Germany). Andreas Bohnenstengel/Wikimedia Commons.

Take a look at this picture. It may be nothing more than a photograph of a boy, no more and no less. Yet let us assume that there is more to this picture than what appears at first glance. For example, we may notice the boy's clothes. Perhaps not new, but secondhand? Perhaps the clothes are also not entirely clean, though they could be. As we may also notice the surroundings, we will also see bare walls and a nondescript hallway, plus something that looks like a baby carriage next to the opposite wall and a door. An apartment building, perhaps of working-class families? Or could it be another kind of building—a hospital or clinic?

We could make inferences one after another in this process about what we see, and build stories in our minds about the boy, his surroundings, and where he is. From there, we may infer many things between what we see and guess at a reality that is deeper and may yield a story about the boy's family, their circumstances, and perhaps even his future.

In reality, the image is derived from a photograph of a boy in a refugee center in Germany. Viewers have no clues other than the credits on the image about the title of the shot and the location. They may not even notice such information. Yet if they get around to the credits, it might confirm much of what they inferred.

Such inference is the stuff of everyday understanding. We constantly encounter things we do not initially know or understand,

yet deal with them if there is something that piques our interest, and consequently make meaning from them. In itself, inference may seem unremarkable for its commonplace utility. Yet such meaning-making has more to it than what appears on the surface. Indeed, an entire field is devoted to the study of this phenomenon from a variety of sources, including the visual—namely, semiotics. What is more, as language learning is also a process of making meaning and understanding out of what is initially the unfamiliar, the phenomenon plays a crucial and not inconsiderable role for learners.

What might an image such as this provide to language learners, and what might they be able to express about it? This short paper explores the use of photojournalistic images on global-glocal themes with mostly first-year humanities students in a private university high intermediate-level basic English writing class. The image above was one of three photographs used to gauge the effects that such imagery had on the students' written expression and exposition, along with the role that the frame of photographic contextualization may have played in shaping what they wrote. Photography, in particular photojournalistic images, may provide rich sources of context and facilitate the meaning-making that could boost learners' confidence and skill in description, characterization, and exposition in writing.

### Overview of Imagery in L2 Pedagogy

Imagery in the widest sense of the term has long had a place in the language classroom, and its instrumental function has often been taken for granted. The following view may be a fairly typical characterization of how most language teaching has positioned the use of imagery in the L2 classroom:

(...) illustrations, visuals, pictures, perceptions, mental images, figures, impressions, likenesses, cartoons, charts, graphs, colors, replicas, reproductions, or anything else used to help one see an immediate

meaning in the language may benefit the learner by helping to clarify the message, provided the visual works in a positive way to enhance or supplement the language point. (Canning-Wilson, 2000)

Yet such a view, while undoubtedly true, may obscure how some forms of imagery may function more deeply in language teaching and learning. Research has explored the capacity of audio-visual material to bring together listening comprehension, authentic spoken language, and cultural content (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1990; Herron & Hanley, 1992; Braddock, 1996), while its stimulation of oral and written production with a range of learners has also been noted (Wetzel, Radtke, & Stern, 1994; Weyers, 1999). The authenticity of such material for the L2 classroom is highlighted by Breen (1985), and its capacity to bring together language and content in “real-time” use is endorsed by McCarthy and Carter (1995).

For teachers who may wish to sidestep the complicating factors that may come with some digital audio-visual material, however, photography may serve as an alternative. Its content can be as rich and variegated as film and video but held within a fixed framework, and comparatively more straightforward to use in the classroom. The research in ELT, however, is somewhat less incisive with regard to the use of photography. Most language research involving visual material tends to indiscriminately group photographic images with other forms of imagery. Yet photography is structured somewhat differently from other visual material, and a fuller examination of its structure and possibilities of use is necessary.

### **The Potential of Photography for L2 Global-glocal Content**

A groundbreaking study of visual anthropology may shed light on the unique structure and potential of photography and its suitability to language teaching and learning. The American anthropologist John Collier Jr. first explored the use of photographic imagery in the 1950s in

pioneering ethnographic research on socio-economic changes in eastern Canadian fishing communities in the Maritime provinces. He used photographs to elicit stories from his subjects for recollection of their past ways of life and to ascertain effects of the changes on their mental health, finding that the images had an affirmative impact on his subjects in yielding detailed and expressive recall. Collier (1957) observed:

We feel that the stimulation of a photograph stems from its very nature. A photograph is an abstraction. No matter how familiar the object or situation portrayed may be, a photograph is a restatement of reality; it presents life around us in new, objective, and arresting dimensions, and can stimulate the informant to discuss the world about him as if observing it for the first time (p. 859).

What Collier discovered, and brings to our attention, is the way that photography frames a moment from observed and identifiable reality while removing it from the moment, paradoxically maintaining such time and space and preserving content within a framework that is comprehensible and communicable. What is more, this framework may also create another dynamic of immediate contextualization for the subject. For language learning, such play of ambiguity with comprehension and context may be a form of input that opens possibilities for meaning-making and exploration. But even more, such input, especially in photo-journalistic form, is ideal content for probing with depth a range of cross-cultural, social, and political issues (Landay, Meehan, Newman, Wootton, & King, 2001; Strickland, Keat, & Marinak, 2010).

The instantaneous contextualization that photography offers is ideal for positioning learner output into a larger contextual framework, particularly for writing. The role of contextualization for L2 writing was highlighted in a presentation by Paul Kei

Matsuda (2013) as a way of focusing learner writing and fostering greater meaningfulness in assignments by creating contexts for them to write to, with the aim of creating a small readership beyond the classroom. These features, when contextualized, may form engaging activities and projects for L2 learner writing. When explored as global-glocal content, potential for narrative exposition may open up greatly.

### **A Photojournalistic Approach to L2 Writing on Global-Glocal Issues**

Perhaps the most stimulating photography many anecdotally see, recall and discuss is photojournalistic in nature. Such photography is especially suited for socially and politically oriented themes, and I decided to tap into photojournalistic image and content involving global-glocal issues with my learners. I chose to focus on refugee issues, given the timeliness of their situation and how images of refugees were the most striking and moving among what I found when searching for photography relevant to the overall global-glocal theme. Such issues are also relevant in terms specific to Japanese refugee policy: Japan admits relatively few asylum-seekers, and those it does admit have a profile that stands out in the country given their rarity. Who are they as people, what have they endured, how might they see themselves in Japanese society, and what are their hopes, dreams, and ambitions for the future in Japan?

Believing that such images would unfold much for my learners, and provide content that would enable them to rise to a new level of meaning-making and exposition in their writing, I selected three photographs of various situations involving refugees. I downloaded them from Wikimedia Commons, including the one shown in the introduction, and in turn uploaded the photos onto a blog I created for classroom activities and homework. I explained to the class that I would gather their writing into a blog page collection of student writing on global-glocal issues called *Leaving Home, Going Home*.

As the writing unit was not in a CALL

classroom, I asked the learners to access the blog on their mobile devices and view each picture, then select one and write an initial paragraph in their notebooks. I asked them, when writing their paragraphs, to imagine themselves as a refugee selected to be resettled in Japan, or as a worker for an NGO in Japan dealing with refugee issues and writing on the immediate needs of refugees upon resettlement. My decision to allow the class to choose between two different approaches with the images and how to write about them was twofold: while the focus on the writing in this unit was on the paragraph level, I wished to draw on a sense of creativity from those who wanted to explore it, and to enable them to try to go beyond the paragraph level and into essay writing, for those who wanted to try to write more.

Indeed, I was intrigued by the idea of learners writing creatively to factual content. Smith (2013) points out the contradiction of a stereotypical approach frequently taken by teachers with their learners in producing written content. In his example of graded readers and other creative material in reading classes, he states that teachers often ask learners to write factually about the material they have read, but without asking for their visceral reaction to the stories, or by extension, for them to create stories of their own. He makes the case that “the study and practice of creative forms...is particularly beneficial, and that the human tendency to produce literature—even in a foreign language—should be acknowledged and harnessed in foreign language education” (Smith, 2013, p. 13). Within such a view, I sought to have my learners engage with factual content viscerally as a basis to write creatively. It was my sense that such an approach could encourage the learners to probe and write with empathy, and that doing so would not trivialize, but frame the content in such a way as to bring out their immediate, gut-level reactions.

With the strengths of audio-visual material in mind and the blog capability for it, I also decided to upload a video (Katsuyasoda, 2012) to the blog from a Japanese NGO about refugee resettlement

issues and needs, produced in both Japanese and English. While the focus was still on the photographs as the basis for the learner writing, I saw the need for additional support that the learners could access easily as needed, and that they could nourish their writing with while reflecting on the issues that the photographs might raise for them. I felt that their interest in these issues could possibly be stimulated beyond the classroom, perhaps even turned into content for the humanities seminars involving essay writing that they are required to take in their second year. The next part in the process for the students was to develop their initial paragraphs into short compositions of two-to-three paragraphs in length, to be read aloud to each other and peer-checked and -edited, then typed and emailed to me as first drafts in file attachments for me to review, comment on, and send back to the learners to refine or revise as needed. The students readily accepted this approach and means of sending me their writing, some examples of which follow in the next section.



**Figure 2.** Asylbewerber in einer Sammelunterkunft in Gauting (Bayern, Deutschland)/Asylum seeker in shared accommodation in Gauting (Bavaria, Germany). Andreas Bohnenstengel/Wikimedia Commons.

### Learner Writing on Refugee Issues

The writing samples here are taken from the *Leaving Home, Going Home* blog collection. Overall, the content of the writing revealed layered and sophisticated exploration inspired by the images. Here is one sample where the learner identifies as the subject of the picture to unpack thoughts and feelings many refugees face:

*I am in the hospital now. Because I undergo an examination to go to Japan. Not only me*

*but also my family undergo it. In other words, my family and I are doing to move Japan. My family is my father, mother and one sister. Only I haven't finished an examination yet. I'm afraid of an injection. I wish I'm not injected.*

*Moving to Japan is sad. Because we are leaving our hometown soon. Also I must make my farewells to my friends. I don't know when we can meet again. I received letters and pictures from my friends yesterday. They are my important treasures. Although leaving my hometown is sad very much, I am looking forward to living Japan. I think Japan is a beautiful country, I want to learn Japanese culture and I'm interested in Japanese. Japan seems a fun country. However I have a question. "Is Japan a beautiful country?" I have been told about Japan from my parents. "Wars aren't happened in Japan. Japanese environment is good and Japan is a developed country. But there are some troubles even Japan. They are relations to other countries, political problems, homeless and so on." Although it's difficult for me to understand them, I'll learn about them. (The Daily Sekaijin, 2015).*

This writer demonstrated great depth with feeling, projecting the fears, trepidations, and hopes of what the boy might have been facing.

Writing creatively to such an image enabled emotional understanding and identification with the human material at the center of the picture. To the same image, another student gave the boy not only similar thoughts and feelings, but also a name:

*I am five years old, and my name is Brian. I am going to go Japan as refugee. I have two feelings. First, I am exciting to go Japan, because I can get more comfortable new life. Second, I am nervous and sad, because I cannot speak Japanese, so I am afraid of communicate with Japanese. I want to make friends, but maybe it is difficult. Also I have some friends in my country, but I have to say good bye to my friends. And I do not have enough knowledge about Japan. These are my feelings.*

*When I get used to new life in Japan, I want to help people like me, and I will study hard to protect my parents. Then I will get more good new life. Maybe I think I will get many difficult and hard things in*



*Japan, but I am with a strong feeling.*  
(The Daily Sekaijin, 2015)

This student went further to project Brian's future dream for his family—a dream that many refugees harbor in their hopes for a better life both here and in the countries they are often resettled in.



**Figure 3.** Evstafiev Travnik refugees. Mikhail Evstafiev (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

Some of the writing wove backstories within their scope. This learner projected a life story of a former refugee, who, out of tragedy, built a life after resettlement in Japan and adjusted to a Japanese way of life:

*I'm 76 years old now. That story is when I was 40 years old. My wife is gone, because my wife was dead by war. I'm so sad and I can't live without the wife. But I have to live. So I escaped my country seven years ago. I saving money now, because I'm hoping to go to Japan, and I want to have private business. I have two children, who is one boy and one girl. My job is making traditional things. So I want to know a lot of people that what kind of my job and what is the traditional things. My country's traditional things are textile and ceramic ware. It is my pride to make traditional things. I go to unknown country called Japan and want to spread this traditional quality.*

*When I was 40 years old, I got a visa to go to Japan at last. Children were delight with me, but we were full of uneasiness. We thanked people who were taken care of so far and on the day to go to Japan, went to the airport. We boarded an airplane. When we arrived at Japan at the first time, it was very cold and it snowed in winter. We were so surprised because we saw snow for the first time. There was our house in the place called Azabu. There was the*

*town which was quiet and seemed to be safe. When we opened the shop, Japanese people were interested in and they saw it. Article and we. Five years later, I thought Japanese people is so kind but introverted and so negative. Some people is positive but almost negative. But now, we are used to life in Japan and live happily. We love Japan. My job and life is success!!*  
(The Daily Sekaijin, 2015).

On the other hand, this writer took the migration itself as the subject, writing with greater brevity but no less empathy about what a refugee feels on the journey itself:



**Figure 4.** Refugees on a boat. Unattributed U.S. Navy photographer (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

*I feel very depressed at this moment on the boat. I usually don't get sea-sick, but I feel like I'm about to throw up. Too many people on one boat. I see some girls crying, grabbing mother's sleeves. Some adults are singing the national anthem for not to forget our mother country. I didn't want to leave my country. I asked my girlfriend, well, my 'ex' girlfriend to come with me, but she said "no". Here I am. Standing on the boat with my pals, sharing our least moist cigarettes.*

*Few of my pals are very pumped up and excited to go to Japan, but I'm not. Is it because of my ex, or my anti-fish? I don't know. I guess I'd have to start very slowly to get used to new cultures. I'm feeling melancholic. I don't care how my life's going to be. I don't mind living in the city or country. I don't mind living with ten other people in one tiny room. My only wish is only her. Oh boy... "I can't swim".* (The Daily Sekaijin, 2015).

The following student took the approach of an NGO worker, taking account of a composite of people and situations from each

image to analyze and present in concrete terms what the immediate needs of refugees in Japan are, along with the network that is necessary to sustain their lives here:

*I think that the answers of questions are so many, so in this paper, I will list four factors which seem to be needed for refugees. First of all, they would need the information to live in Japan. For example, how to find the houses to live, buy foods, wash their clothes and count the money in Japan. The second they would need is the companies to advise each other. In the group, they can talk about any alert and learn how to live comfortably, and be relaxed. The third one would be the language skill of Japanese. It let them live in Japan without too much care that NGO cannot do and make their lives easier. But I think teaching Japanese is out of work of NGO because teaching acquires the high level of knowledge and skill of plane expression. If I were the worker in the NGO office, I would look for the group teaching Japanese voluntary. The fourth ones are important for refugees to continue living in Japan. Those are supports to make them get jobs and let their children go to school.*

*Now, I wrote about what refugees need for their lives. But there is more important factor. It is for Japanese. Japanese who live with them would need some help to have communication with refugees. So it must be needed that spreading information about refugees to Japanese to get rid of alert that Japanese has. Those Japanese must be afraid of new comers from foreign countries.*

*At last, to do all these factors, NGO workers have to try to connect with other diverse communities in Japan like local-governmental bodies, schools, plants or offices, voluntary groups and so on. To support refugees' lives is not only for work of NGO but all of our communities, groups and organizations in Japan. (The Daily Sekaijin, 2015).*

Overall, the learners responded positively to the project and the images. The photographic contextualization appeared to

help the learners not only focus their writing, but embroider their compositional output with specific detail and exposition that demonstrated empathetic engagement and identification with the people, situations, and issues within the images. The prospect of publication online within the scope of a blog also gave an additional level of contextualization, as well as enthusiasm, in that they were writing for a potential audience beyond the classroom.

While the writing that was situated from the vantage point of NGO workers yielded extensive details on refugee resettlement issues, and the learners could identify with the hardships the refugees may face in Japan, the submissions that took the position of the refugees themselves yielded the most moving work. Such identification enabled learners to break their writing through to creative areas and may have given them a path for extension and characterization. Such aspects may have enriched their composition and contributed to their understanding on refugee issues, and sensitized them to global-glocal themes as a whole.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this process, I had a feeling that photography would be of value for global-glocal theme exploration, all the more with photojournalistic imagery and the compelling content it is known for. Yet I did not foresee, as the process unfolded, just how powerful such imagery could be for developing empathetic engagement and greater depth among learners. This seems to validate my sense that learner creativity is an essential component of language learning, and that it can be channeled in directions that do not detract from academic gravity, but rather add a new dimension to it.

Focusing on refugee issues through such imagery gave learners a platform to craft stories and accounts of greater authenticity that imagined the refugees depicted in the images as more than photojournalistic subjects. Such a platform enabled learners to see refugees as genuine people who could be identified with and understood in immediate and plausible terms. More than anything else,

it brings forward the value of the specific and the concrete as a means to take global-glocal themes out of the abstract and into something instantaneous and graspable for learners. Such an angle is one I wish to continue pursuing with other classes where such content is relevant.

Language teachers often say that they wish for their learners to develop an identity in the L2. The raising of global-glocal awareness through photojournalistic imagery in this writing class enabled the learners to engage and identify with the theme in human terms and perhaps in doing so, deepen their own L2 identity. Perhaps the key in facilitating such development of identity comes from allowing learners to engage with specific and concrete content that stimulates and enables them to craft such content in their terms.

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## Learner Opportunities for Using English as a Lingua Franca with Other Plurilingual Speakers During Fieldwork in Cambodia

カンボジアでのフィールドワークにおける 複言語スピーカーとの共通語としての英語使用機会

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### Abstract

In this article I explore questions about English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contact situations for Japanese university students during a short fieldwork trip in Cambodia. I report on a small study of Japanese students' opportunities for using ELF with other non-native speakers (NNS), analysing the positive effects of those language-using episodes on students' "willingness to communicate" in English (L2 WtC) (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004). As the vast majority of English users are NNS in an Asian context, there are interesting questions about how Japanese students may shift their perspectives of ideal linguistic role models (Kosaka, 2014) such as: Do they stay with an idealised NS standard? Or do they shift to a position of competent plurilingual NNS user of English? To explore these questions, I surveyed the participants before, during and after the fieldwork trip, carried out interviews and did field observations. During intercultural exchanges with Cambodian university students, the students negotiated meaningful English (and Japanese) communication, despite frequent communication breakdowns. As a result of successful Lingua Franca episodes, students' perspectives on ideal language models shifted from native speaker norms to include near-peer NNS role models. The students' identities also changed from *learners* to *users* of English. This study indicates that learners' confidence, motivation, agency for language learning and L2 WtC can be strengthened through different ELF interactions with plurilingual NNS in Asian contexts.

### 概要

本稿は、カンボジアでの短期フィールドワークに参加した日本人大学生の、共通語としての英語交流に関して考察する。小規模研究として、日本人学生の他の非英語母語話者との共通語として英語使用機会に焦点を当てながら、そうした英語使用体験が「学習者の英語でコミュニケーションをしようとする気持ち」(Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004)にいかに関与しているかを分析した。アジア諸国では大多数の英語使用者が非英語母語話者であることを鑑みると、日本人学生の理想的言語モデル (Kosaka, 2014) の認識の変化に関していくつかの興味深い疑問が浮かび上がってくる。例えば、彼らはフィールドワーク終了後も理想化された英語母語話者基準を持ち続けるのか。もしくは、有能で複言語を話せる非英語母語話者という姿勢を持つようになるのか。これらの問いを明らかにするため、本研究対象である日本人大学生にフィールドワーク参加前、参加中、そして参加後にアンケートを実施すると共に、インタビューや現地フィールドにおける観察を行った。カンボジア人大学生との交流中、やりとりが途中で中断してしまうことも度々あったが、日本人大学生たちは、英語(そして日本語)で意義のあるコミュニケーションを行い、共通語としての英語でのコミュニケーションの成功を積み重ねた結果、日本人大学生の理想的言語モデルは、ネイティブスピーカーを基準にしたものからノンネイティブスピーカーの自分に近い仲間をロールモデルとしたものへと変化した。また彼らのアイデンティティーも、英語学習者から英語使用者へと変化が見られた。本研究は、学習者の語学学習に対する自信、動機、主体性、そして、第二言語でコミュニケーションをしようという気持ちは、アジア諸国で複言語を話す非英語母語話者と共通語としての英語でやりとりすることにより強化されることを示唆している。

### Keywords

Lingua Franca, fieldwork trips, plurilingual speakers, near-peer role models, learner identity 共通語、フィールドワーク、複言語スピーカー、自分に近い仲間のロールモデル、学習者アイデンティティー



## Introduction

English as a Lingua Franca communication amongst NNS and sometimes native speakers (NS) is currently the most common use of English worldwide (Seidlhofer, 2011), and as such learners of English as an additional language need to experience real-world situations where they can use “their English” to communicate with speakers of different first languages across cultures and in a range of contexts. As the vast majority of English users are NNS in an Asian context, there are interesting questions about how Japanese students may shift their perspectives of ideal linguistic role models (Kosaka, 2014). Do they stay with an idealised NS standard, or shift to a position of competent plurilingual NNS user of English? Do they continue to believe that they need to use NS levels of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy and pronunciation to be able to communicate effectively with other NNS? In so far as Japanese may also be used as a Lingua Franca among people from different countries in Asia, the mixing of English, Japanese and local languages in interactions with local people may challenge Japanese students to re-think what they had thought were “normal” or acceptable modes of language use and communication (e.g., monolingual and plurilingual communication). So, what kinds of linguistic and intercultural competences do learners actually need to achieve their communicative goals, deal with communication breakdown and negotiate meaning in real-life interactions? Finally, how can we language educators foster learner development by helping our learners to recognise and take up opportunities for ELF use in diverse NNS/plurilingual contexts? These are the kinds of puzzles I have been working on with learners who often struggle to see English study or English use as having much relevance in their current or future lives, and which were particularly salient in the fieldwork trip in Cambodia.

## The Cambodia Fieldwork Course

In 2013, a Japanese professor with whom I shared an interest in global issues education

invited me to accompany her and a group of *International Communications* major students to a new fieldwork destination, Cambodia. Cambodia was chosen for fieldwork as an emerging Asian economy with which Japan has links through trade agreements, government aid and development programmes, private companies, social businesses and NGO/NPO activities. The fieldwork aimed to help students understand the role of social businesses and NGOs in dealing with issues of poverty and sustainable development. Students would visit several social businesses and NGOs, and participate in two university exchange events. At the first event, both the visiting students and the host students (all Japanese language majors) gave presentations in Japanese at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) in an event hosted by the Cambodia Japan Cooperation Centre (CJCC). For the second university exchange we joined with Paññāsāstra University’s English major students to participate in a “City Clean-Up Campaign” by picking up rubbish on streets in Siem Reap. As visitors to the World Heritage Site, Angkor Wat in Siem Reap, my colleague wanted the students to engage in activities with local people, and to think about the issues of “responsible tourism” and “ethical consumerism”.

## Language Use in Cambodia

Alongside Cambodia’s official language, Khmer, Cambodian French retains historical significance in Cambodian education and diplomacy. However, Chinese and English are now seen as important international languages, and English particularly has a “special status” in Cambodian education and business spheres with many Cambodians now seeing it as a necessity for success in the world of international commerce and politics. So, knowing that opportunities for ELF would surely exist in the two major cities we would visit in Cambodia (Phnom Penh and Siem Reap), I conducted research to explore how my students could optimise ELF opportunities during their fieldwork activities and interactions with other NNS such as local service people, staff at social

businesses, and particularly with local university peers.

### ***Pre-departure Preparation***

The Cambodia fieldwork-seminar course was a semester-long course in Japanese, comprising preparation classes via group research and peer presentations, the eight-day fieldwork trip focusing on social businesses and NGOs, and assessment via learner reflections and reports. I informally collaborated with my Japanese colleague to define learner goals including:

- research and presentations in Japanese to learn and peer-teach about aspects of Cambodia and some specific social businesses working towards sustainable development;
- presentations (about university life and future dreams) in Japanese for university exchange events;
- practising communication English for daily use, and learning about English as a Lingua Franca opportunities in Cambodia.

I was invited to join the preparation classes early on in the semester and provide short language activities to prime students pre-departure for real-life English communication with local people, especially Cambodian students as near-peer role models. From my previous experiences of working with English language learners in Vietnam and China, I believed it was very likely that Cambodian students would be pretty motivated learners and users of English (and Japanese). I explained this belief and my research aims to the participants, and expressed my hope that they would indeed make use of opportunities to use English as a common language at times during their fieldwork.

Task-based language activities included icebreaker and mingle-type activities to encourage mixing between *sempai* and *kohai*, content-focused team quizzes based on the peer research presentations about Cambodia, and finally awareness-raising interview-discussions about perceptions of ELF and language diversity in Cambodia. These language tasks were aimed at increasing

learners' "willingness to communicate" in English (L2 WtC), and fostering a "community of practice" to ensure that the cultural exchange activities with two Cambodian university groups would be supportive, lively and productive.

The students and I talked about ELF perceptions and language use in Cambodia. I emphasized that the key goal in Lingua Franca communication is "mutual intelligibility" (Seidlhofer, 2009 cited in Kirkpatrick, 2011), conveying meaning and ideas with local people, and not getting stuck on "perfect" English. English development in itself was not the goal of the fieldwork but through shared projects and interactions with their Cambodian peers, we hoped that our students might be motivated to use ELF as a tool for intercultural communication and goal achievement. Even though we all enthusiastically learnt some basic Khmer phrases to be friendly and polite with locals, students knew that this would not go far. They would likely have to resort to using English on many occasions.

### **Research Methods, Pre-and Post-surveys**

I carried out qualitative research with the 20 participants of the fieldwork-seminar course during the winter of 2013-2014, and specifically during the eight-day fieldwork trip to Cambodia. There was a fairly even mixture of 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> year students, six males and 14 females, who possessed a range of L2 English proficiency levels and L2-learning motivation levels from several fairly confident and motivated Study Abroad returnees to students who had very little interest in English study beyond their major's requirements.

Pre-survey questions (Appendix 1) were aimed at finding out learner beliefs about the opportunities for English use in Cambodia, their current confidence with English, and whether English study/practice was among the goals or reasons for joining this fieldwork trip. Post-survey questions (Appendix 2) aimed at revealing the *actual incidence* of English use, and any *changes* in students' self-belief or language confidence. While the pre- and post-survey questions were not exactly

identical, there was some congruence that allowed for pre-departure and post-fieldwork comparisons. During the fieldwork trip I kept a “participant observation” journal with particular interest in instances of Lingua Franca communication in action, as well as student interactions during the intercultural exchange activities with two universities. I also gathered additional data from translations of students’ reflections and reports to develop more informed learner perspectives on ELF in the context of fieldwork (Morgan, 2016).

## Results and Discussion

### *The Need or Opportunity for English Use*

First, it appears that pre-departure most students recognised that they would (have to) use some degree of English whilst in Cambodia (as shown in Figure 1). Post-trip answers showed a definite shift where now more than half reported that they actually used “a lot of English” during the trip. It is unclear exactly what students perceived as “a lot”—is it a lot compared to what they had *imagined* they would use, or a lot compared to what they are able to use in Japan? No matter what, it is significant that students *did* take advantage of many chances to use English to communicate with other NNS whilst in Cambodia.

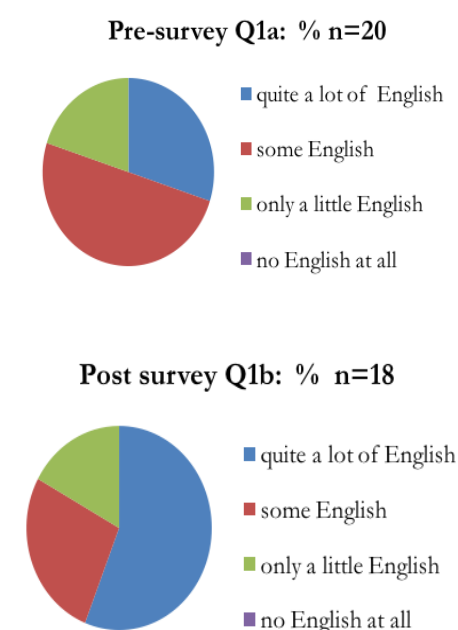


Figure 1. The Need or Opportunity for English Use.

Some respondents including Chinatsu and Kouta commented:

*“I communicated a lot in English even though I rarely use it in Japan. Even for people who are not native speakers, it is still pretty easy to communicate or listen and catch the meaning. When it’s hard to understand (each other) we can use gesture and simple English.”* (Chinatsu, Post-survey, Q1b, January 10, 2014)

*“Only RUPP students could speak Japanese, after this we had to use English. Even when we tried simple Khmer greetings, market sellers used English (or Japanese) phrases even though they never studied.”* (Kouta, Post-survey, Q1b, January 10, 2014)

Chinatsu found that ELF was useful in Cambodia, even though English is not an official language there, and that a focus on the main meaning is more important than needing NS-level English. Kouta became aware that both ELF and JLF were used in some shops and tourist places where any common language is used for specific purposes to achieve certain (transactional) goals; Japanese students used Khmer to make an initial friendly connection, but then interlocutors instinctively switched to common languages. Among NNS, the students discovered that they could focus on intelligibility and intercultural understanding rather than grammatical accuracy.

### *ELF Opportunities with a Range of Interlocutors*

Next, I asked participants to imagine *who* they would have the chance to speak English with (Appendix 1, Q2a), and all students listed a range of people with whom they perceived they would (have to) speak some English with during their trip, and most likely for transactional, tourism-related purposes (e.g., with hotel staff); already one quarter expected to use English with local students. I wanted learners to start thinking about the range of people they might use ELF with before they arrived in Cambodia (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** ELF Opportunities with a Range of Interlocutors.

Interlocutors mentioned by students	Pre-survey Q2a N = 20	Post-survey Q2b N = 18
Hotel staff	70%	94%
At the airport (immigration); on the plane	35%	88%
With local university students	25%	70%
With local people (Cambodians), e.g., taking taxi or tuktuk/shop people/sellers	15%	70%
Other foreigners/tourists	10%	55%
Staff at social businesses	10%	28%
Restaurant staff	5%	67%
Tour guide	5%	0%
The police (if lost)	5%	n/a
Local children	n/a	22%
Local people walking past	n/a	44%

Table 1 reveals that students interacted with a *wider* range of people, and used *a whole lot more English* than they had imagined they would before the trip; student comments mentioned using English with “local children” and “local people walking past”.

*“Some school kids calling out to us in English, they were laughing when we tried to greet in Khmer... I was surprised the twelve year old girl and her friend were so confident to speak English with us.”*  
(Maki, Post-survey, Q2b, January 10, 2014)

#### *Taking the Native Speaker Role and Using Japanese as a Lingua Franca*

At the first intercultural exchange event with RUPP Japanese major students, our students were in the “native speaker” role with their Cambodian counterparts (see Figure 2). From participant data, this seemed to be a powerful experience for the Japanese students—for once they were the confident speakers, the linguistic models; they were

proactive and showed leadership in the discussions which followed the peer presentations. I felt moved observing them being flexible, empathetic and accommodating for the users of L2 Japanese.

*“When talking to the RUPP students in Japanese I thought about how it was the same as if I was speaking English to a native speaker. I noticed that when I’m ever conversing with an English native speaker, I was (only) able to converse because the other person naturally understood where the conversation was going and helped me out. But when we were discussing with the RUPP students, now we are native speaker... so, we tried to speak slower and simple Japanese... or we switched to using English when they couldn’t understand. I want to be able to skilfully switch between two languages ...and help us each to understand the other.”*  
(Naoki, reflection, January 10, 2014)



**Figure 2.** Japanese Students in the Native speaker Role Using JLF with Their Cambodian Peers.

The experience of being the “native speaker role model” with their peers was valuable, and somehow connected the students to developing their identities as plurilingual speakers and users of English.

Later, during a visit to a social business (*Friends International Romdeng Restaurant*), I observed a younger Cambodian shop assistant using a number of Japanese phrases to joke with two of my students who were buying souvenirs. This sent the Japanese students into fits of surprised laughter which then turned into a lively interchange switching between Khmer, Japanese and English. The students successfully completed their purchases and obtained information about the products made by former street children. Here, participants



experienced plurilingualism in action where users calls on whatever linguistic and pragmatic resources they have in order to achieve their communicative goals (Bernaus et al., 2007).

I further noticed that, as time went on, the more the Japanese students had successful ELF interactions (peppered with Khmer or Japanese from both sides) with local people and with the local university groups, the more they wanted to interact which led to increased confidence and L2 WtC. From comments during reflections, some students expressed surprise and delight that local sellers in the market and some shops could often speak English and/or a little Japanese (see Figure 3). Clearly, when plurilingual users interact, it is not just *English* as a Lingua Franca that speakers turn to, but it could be *Japanese* or any other *common* languages. Thus, Lingua Franca conditions catalyse multiple Lingua Franca use.



Figure 3. Using ELF, JLF and Very Basic Khmer with Local People

#### Confidence with English and Changing Identities

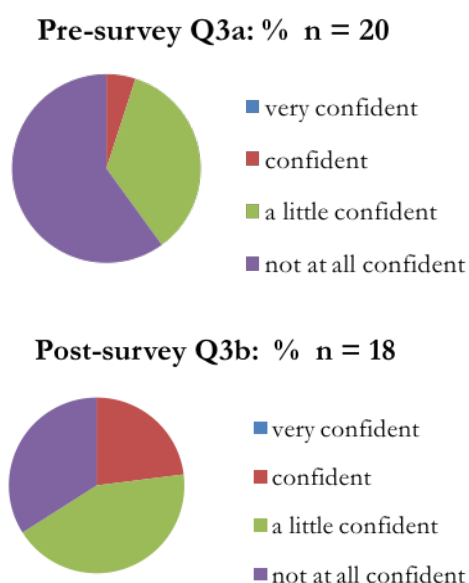


Figure 4. Confidence with Speaking English.

Q3a and Q3b elicited changes in students' confidence with English after the fieldwork experience where they had been communicating in English and using ELF in varying amounts every day. Pre-departure more than half the participants felt "not at all confident" about speaking English. In contrast, the post-trip results show a slight positive shift in L2 confidence (see Figure 4). More students now said they felt "confident speaking English" or "a little confident. Somewhat fewer students now felt "not at all confident" using English.

From this small sample it is not possible to make any absolute claims about the positive effects of ELF-using experiences on students' L2 confidence, but certainly when delving deeper into the students' final-night reflections and their fieldwork reports it does appear that many did come to feel more confident about using English/ELF, they felt a heightened WtC in English, and expressed strengthened identities as users of English. This increased L2 WtC during ELF interactions is exemplified in Nanami's comment:

*"We met many people and I felt frustrated so many times because I wanted to be able to speak more... for the first time I felt a hunger to learn more English grow inside of me."*  
(Nanami, reflection, January 10, 2014)

As a result of frequent authentic English communicative episodes with their plurilingual peers, participants' confidence with English grew, along with their sense of ownership of English (Widdowson, 1994). At the same time, the students' identities developed into rightful *users* of English and no longer just *learners* of English (Norton, 1997). One student in particular, Chihoko, evaluated herself as "*not confident at all with English*" pre-survey and post-survey, but in her final-night reflections Chihoko described at some length her use of English and the "good experience" she had had, particularly during the City Clean-up event in Siem Reap (see Figure 5):

*"I could use English positively during the 'clean-up' activity". (This time) students*

*couldn't speak Japanese so we had to use English, gestures and smiles. Their English was really smooth, maybe I couldn't understand half of English they were saying... but they were very kind and they tried to find easy words. Finally, we could say many things and get to know (each other) deeply. I felt refreshed because both of us used language (English) which is not mother tongue and we could understand each other."*

Chihoko was very engaged in the fieldwork objectives and the issues the social businesses were dealing with. Despite her low L2 confidence, she demonstrated agency to communicate with Cambodian peers and NGO staff and successfully negotiated interactions using ELF.



Figure 5. Using Primarily ELF with Local Students and Residents during a City Clean-up Event.

#### Reasons for Participating in Fieldwork in Cambodia

I was keen to find out whether English study figured among the reasons for joining the Cambodia fieldwork trip or future fieldwork activities (see Q4a, Q4b). Some students felt English study/practice or ELF was “no reason” for joining the fieldwork trip, but more than half the group cited English as “a small reason”. In contrast, post-trip and with some successful ELF experiences behind them, a clear shift could be recognized among students with a majority now saying that English practice *would* be an item for consideration when choosing future fieldwork trips. Now, more than half the respondents said that English would be “a very big reason” or “a reason”, and significantly fewer students now said “English would not be a reason” in their decisions (as shown in Figure 6). Perhaps now, these learners recognize valuable opportunities for English use in NNS

countries and contexts, and not just in NS country destinations.

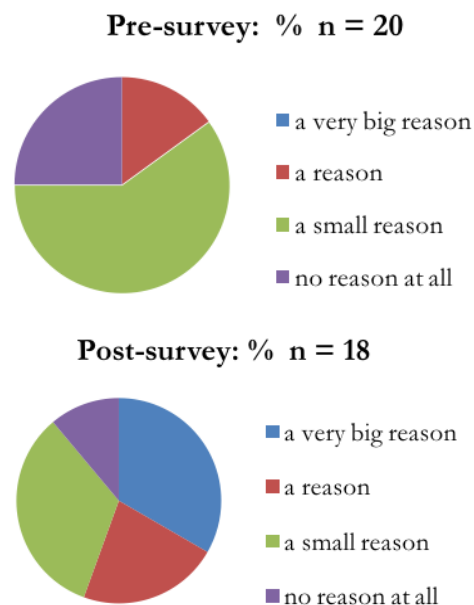


Figure 6. Reasons for Choosing Fieldwork in Cambodia.

The final pre-trip question Q5a aimed to draw out their general reasons for choosing the Cambodia seminar course and fieldwork trip. More than half the students had some *prior knowledge or experience* of the destination country, Cambodia:

*“When I was elementary school student, our volunteer club gave books to a Cambodian school.”* (Yuka, Pre-survey, Q5a, November 22, 2013).

About two thirds of the class expressed *interest in foreigners or a foreign culture*, with Minami, for example, now turning her orientation away from Europe towards Asia as a potentially rich site for cultural commonality, intercultural learning, and near-peer language role models.

*“I was previously interested only in European countries because I like that culture or history, but now I’m interested in learning about Asian neighbor countries... closer cultures. I felt closeness to the girls at Kamonobashi.”* (Minami, Pre-survey, Q5a, November 22, 2013).

### *Perceived Language Gaps and Future Learning Goals*

The post-survey question (Q5b: Now, what English language skills do you wish you had so that you could communicate better with local students and local people?) was of great interest to me as I hoped that through reflection about language gaps the students might identify and develop their future language learning goals. When recalling communication breakdowns caused by language gaps, participants identified various English skills they wished for in order to connect more deeply with Cambodian peers and local people. Some talked about gaps in listening skills, difficulty with Cambodian accents, the high level of English proficiency shown by the Cambodian students, and a need for more vocabulary to be able to both hear and understand what was being said, and to then be able to respond in detail: *“I have always thought about speaking English (production) but I should have studied more listening in class (in Japan). I really enjoyed communicating with local people but sometimes I couldn’t hear (understand) their English very well.”* (Anonymous). Although some participants felt stuck with limited vocabulary and wished they could express themselves more clearly and with interesting details, they had now understood that the main goal was to *“just say your ideas.”* Moreover, despite communication difficulties, most students realized that non-standard grammar and accents did not seem to stop them from understanding one another—they just needed to be flexible, accommodating, and adaptable: *“If we listen carefully, or repeat again, we can usually catch meaning”* and *“Even with (my) poor English vocabulary, (I could) make many mistakes...often (using) gestures and body language”* (Field note, Yuko, December 2013).

A number of participants expressed regret that they had not applied themselves more in past English classes, and then talked about goals for the coming year: *“I should practise easy conversation more”* and *“I discovered that big vocabulary is more important than grammar so this year I need to study more vocabulary and communication ability so I can understand new friends better.”* Finally, nearly all the students

specifically expressed huge respect for, and surprise at, just how well many of the Cambodian students could speak Japanese or English depending on their major, how much language study they do alone every day, and the Cambodians’ positive view of higher education and their ambitions after graduation: *“I want to speak English like (Nary)... he was so fluent and relaxed speaker. He told (me) he studies a lot and talks English with anyone he can.”* Several Japanese participants still keep in touch with Cambodian students, communicating in English and/or Japanese in their expanded online community. Within many negotiated ELF-using episodes, learners find more accessible role models, expand their “imagined communities”, and develop their “English-using selves” (Yashima, 2009).

Through recalling and reflecting, participants consolidated the positive ELF interactions and language-using episodes they had had with their Cambodian peers and with local people they had encountered each day, learned useful lessons from the communication breakdowns, and set future learning goals. Thus, it appears that the participants’ confidence, motivation, agency for language learning and L2 WtC were strengthened as a result of these different ELF interactions with plurilingual NNS in Cambodia.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

As a language teacher I learnt a huge amount about my students and our learning-teaching processes during this fieldtrip. It appears that as a result of their uptake of ELF opportunities, learners’ confidence in using English and their motivation for English study changed in positive ways. Furthermore, students gained a broader and deeper understanding of issues facing developing countries, and began to make connections with these in their own lives. In exposing our learners to ELF models, ownership for English shifts to include all users—students, educators, and other world citizens alike (Rajagopalan, 2004). Ultimately, ELF perspectives in language learning-teaching can improve and sustain learner



motivation and confidence towards not just their own language learning and using, but also foster openness to language diversity and other world views throughout our students' lives.

Now that I have expanded my own views of language diversity and use, perhaps I am more able to help my learners to become aware of *multiple* Lingua Franca use and to view plurilingualism as a common or normal practice. The fieldwork students experienced the mixing of *English, Japanese and local languages* in their interactions with local people. We can help students shift their focus from NS norms and ideals to look around themselves, and find their own near-peer role models who are using language to communicate successfully in creative and relevant ways. As educators, we can raise learners' awareness about the diverse opportunities to use English as a Lingua Franca with both NNS (and NS) in their classrooms (Jenkins, 2012), on campus, in intercultural clubs and events, in Japan, and in fieldwork trips in other countries and so on. We can help motivate our learners by finding out what issues they are interested in, what experiences they have already had (in their other university classes and in their majors); we can also bring in content-based learning about real world issues that they as young people can engage with while using their English.

Collaborating with other teachers to help students connect learning across classrooms is also worthwhile. I am aware it is not always easy to develop collegiality; there are sometimes intercultural and/or administrative barriers to this, and it can take a long while to develop professional trust with other faculty members. But it is worth the effort for our learners, and when we provide "rich, situated learning opportunities" (Jones, 2013) through fieldwork projects and other activities about global issues, we can expose learners to language use in the real world. This can help our students develop their identities as language users and world citizens beyond the classroom.

### Acknowledgment

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## Appendix 1: Pre-Trip Survey

## English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) During Cambodia Fieldwork

**Q1a. Do you think you will speak, or will have to speak any English in Cambodia?**

カンボジアで英語を話す機会があると思いますか。

1. No English at all      2. Only a little English      3. Some English      4. Quite a lot of English.

まったくなかった.      少しあった.      ある程度あった.      非常にあった.

**Q2a. Right now, who do you imagine (think) you will have the chance to speak English with?**

誰と英語を話す機会があると思いますか。

**Q3a. Right now, how confident do you feel speaking English?**

今、あなたはどのくらい英語に自信がありますか。

1. Not at all confident      2. A little confident      3. Confident      4. Very confident.

まったくない      少しある      ある      非常にある

**Q4a. Was English study a reason for joining the Cambodia fieldwork trip?**

英語学習を目的としてカンボジアフィールドワークに参加しましたか。

1. No reason at all      2. A small reason      3. A reason      4. A very big reason.

まったくない      少しある      ある      非常にある

**Q5a. What are your main goals or reasons for joining the Cambodia fieldwork trip?**

(Japanese or English is OK). カンボジアフィールドワークに参加しようとした目的、または理由を2つ以上述べてください。

## Appendix 2: Post-Trip Survey

## English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) During Cambodia Fieldwork

**Q1b. Did you speak any English while you were in Cambodia?** あなたはカンボジアに滞在中、で英語を話す機会がありましたか。

1. No English at all      2. Only a little English      3. Some English      4. Quite a lot of English.

まったくなかった.      少しあった.      ある程度あった.      非常にあった.

**Q2b. Who did you speak English with during the fieldwork trip?** フィールドワーク旅行中、あなたは誰と英語で話しましたか? Circle as many words below as you like, and write your own ideas:

該当するもの全てに丸をし、自由にコメントを書いて下さい:

Other foreigners/ other tourists/ hotel staff/ restaurant staff / street sellers/ market/ shop sellers/

他の外国人/ 他の旅行者/ ホテルスタッフ/ レストランスタッフ/ 通りの売り子/ 市場や店の店員

local people walking by/ local children/ university students/ other people: \_\_\_\_\_

通りすがりの地元民/ 地元の子供/ 大学生/ その他の人々: \_\_\_\_\_

**Q3b. Right now, how confident do you feel speaking English?**

(今、あなたはどのくらい英語に自信がありますか)

1. Not at all confident      2. A little confident      3. Confident      4. Very confident.

まったくない      少しある      ある      非常にある

**Q4b. In the future, do you think that English study or English practice will be a reason for joining other fieldwork trips in foreign countries?** (あなたは、将来、英語の勉強または英語の練習を理由に海外で行なわれる別のフィールドワークに参加するかどうかと思いますか)

1. No reason at all      2. A small reason      3. A reason      4. A very big reason

まったくない      少しある      ある      非常にある

**Q5b. Now, what English communication skills do you wish you had so that you could communicate better with local students and local people?** (Japanese or English is OK).

今、あなたは、地元学生や地元民とより良くコミュニケーションするためにどんな英語スキルがあれば良かったと考えますか? (コメントは日本語または英語のどちらでも OK)

## Diversifying Writing in Student Research Projects on Global Issues: Exploring the Creative-Critical Dynamic

多様化するライティング —創造的・批判的ダイナミック研究—

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### Abstract

In this short paper I look at fundamental changes that I made in a first-year university research and writing course on global issues. These changes were made to break free of the confines that an excessive focus on academic genre conventions can involve. What might an engagement with global issues through writing begin to entail where students are asked to try a diverse range of academic and real-world genres and exercise choice over the genres that they wish to use for communicating their research to others? In exploring this central question, I draw on the perspectives of both Exploratory Practice (Allwright & Hanks, 2009) and Critical Literacy (Janks, 2010) as I look at how students may be guided to make, deconstruct, and re-design texts, as they work both creatively and critically on the development of their literacy practices. This exploration represents an initial—and incomplete—attempt to probe “the creative-critical dynamic” in student research and writing about global issues. It also raises questions about how students themselves see their developing capacity for creative and critical engagement with global issues through research and writing.

### 要旨

本稿では、大学1年生を対象にしたグローバル問題に関するリサーチライティング授業での抜本的な変化について考察する。本実践により、アカデミックジャンルの慣習を重視しすぎるという制約を打破するという変化をもたらした。アカデミックで現実世界の様々なジャンルを試し、自身の研究の伝達手段としてのジャンル選択も求められるライティングでのグローバル問題の実践では、一体何が必要になるのだろうか。この核心的な問題の探究にあたり、Exploratory Practice (Allwright & Hanks, 2009)とCritical Literacy (Janks, 2010)の観点を用い、リテラシー発達に創造的かつ批判的に取り組みながら、学生自身がどのようにテキストを作成、脱構築、再考案するかを考察する。本実践は、グローバル問題に関するリサーチとライティングでの「クリエイティブ・クリティカルダイナミック」を探究する初めての（不完全な）試みであるが、リサーチとライティングを通じたグローバル問題への創造的かつ批判的な実践での能力向上に対する学生自身の捉え方についても論じる。

### Keywords

academic literacy, global issues, genre diversification, creativity, criticality

アカデミックリテラシー、グローバル問題、ジャンルの多様性、創造力、批判力

*“It was so hard for me to change different text types because I had to change the way of researching in each type. For example, in Cycle 4, I had to research individual cases including quotation. It was different from the types that I did in Cycle 1- Cycle 3, so global issues news article text was the most challenging text type, but it is also the most satisfying text type for me...”* (Reina, end-of-year reflection)

*“I feel interesting that I change text types. That is because I can broad my range of expression through learning some different manners of writing, so I think that’s useful for me at the same time. The most challenging type was Question Sheet. In order to use this type, it is required to comprehend what is the problem and to pick up appropriate questions ...”* (Masayuki, end-of-year reflection)

*“Research Report text style was easy to write. However, it was good to write this style in the last cycle. Media text and other text styles that we wrote in spring semester have peculiar style so we need to have ideas to research and to write...If we had written Research Report or Research Narrative in spring semester they might be monotonous writing...”* (Kanako, end-of-year reflection)

## Introduction

The end-of-year reflections by Kanako, Masayuki, and Reina<sup>1</sup> give some sense of the challenges and benefits that a class of first-year students experienced in researching global issues and writing about them in different genres. Reina notices how her research was constrained by genre: in order to write a “Global Issues News Article,” she needed to search for specific quotations to give voice to different individuals’ experiences. Masayuki highlights how writing in different genres helped him develop a sense of versatility in

expressing his ideas. His reflection also suggests that creating a “Question Sheet” helped him to gain a critical perspective about key questions to do with one of the global issues that he researched. Kanako’s comment underlines how writing in a range of real-world genres earlier in the course enabled her to feel confident about producing an academic “Research Report” as her final product for the year. All in all, the three students’ reflections point to how their creativity and criticality were engaged by using different genres to write about the global issues that they researched. In this short paper I look at the diversification of genres in a first-year research and writing course on global issues and explore the interplay between creativity and criticality that such diversification brings into focus in the development of academic literacy.

## Context

The course is part of a common research and writing curriculum for first- and second-year International Law and Business majors. The umbrella focus of the curriculum is the development of academic literacy, which means, in this context, being/becoming able to engage with content and using English to learn about social, political, legal and global issues in self-directed research projects. The primary processes in these academic literacy practices are researching and gathering information and ideas to do with global issues, exchanging and explaining such information and ideas, analyzing and (re-)organizing (in spoken and written discourse) one’s understanding, responding, asking questions, and exploring different positions, in order to develop a critical position about different issues. “Critical” is taken to mean here developing knowledge of a global issue not only by understanding possible causes and conditions, but also examining them from multiple perspectives

<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms are used here to protect the students’ identities.

and identifying and including voices of those affected by the global issue. It also involves looking at who benefits or not, and formulating solutions or alternatives that might be taken by different actors (e.g., persons, communities, organisations) (Barfield, 2015). This view of criticality is derived from work done in the UK on engaging students with controversial issues for citizenship education (Andreotti & Warwick, 2007; Andreotti et al., 2007).

Since 2014 the 13 classes in the first-year course have had a common global issues content focus, with students working mainly with simplified Global Issues readers and producing a 500-word report in the Spring semester, and doing web-based research using a bespoke global issues website (Global Issues Resources, 2016a) in the Autumn semester to complete an 800-word report by the end of the academic year. Students are guided to choose their own research focus where they typically do three weeks of self-directed research and note-taking, before writing, responding to each other's drafts, and revising their own, over a further three or so weeks (although some research and writing cycles are shorter according to the particular approach taken by individual teachers).

In the reformed curriculum the term "report" covers a wide range of genres, without an exclusive focus on academic genres such as "essay" or "research report." The assumption is that students can meet common curriculum requirements for researching (such as raising questions, gathering information, note-taking and paraphrasing) and writing (such as free writing, planning, composing and drafting) by working across different genres rather than within a limited number of specifically academic genres. There are usually between 12 and 20 students in a class, with a wide range of English proficiencies, in the first

year, from low intermediate through to advanced. Most students start their first year without experience of doing extended research or writing in English.

### Questioning Practices

In the 2014 academic year I had asked students to move from "Summary" and "Summary and Discussion" in the Spring semester to "Research Narrative"<sup>2</sup> and "Research Report" in the Autumn, believing that working incrementally with such academic genres was appropriate for a mixed proficiency first-year class new to research and writing in English. Most students in my class took to this readily, but for a few students there was resistance and struggle, manifested in a lack of fluency and voice, perhaps even frustration, at the end of the year. Had writing exclusively in academic genres about global issues supported or limited their development? I wasn't sure, but the struggles of those few students made me begin to re-think how students might differently engage with researching and writing about global issues, leading me to step back and question what I had taken for granted.

Thinking the year over, I realised that from early on I had been expecting students to draft, respond, re-draft, and finalize writing products over three drafts, and that this emphasis on writing process and extended text development had cut down on the space for students to develop writing fluency and voice. Why not put much greater emphasis on writing fluently in the Spring semester by downplaying the need for drafting and re-drafting writing products in the first months of the course? If, instead, students did journaling regularly in class each week based on what they were learning about different global issues, they would have more opportunities for developing their writing fluency and for

<sup>2</sup> A research narrative involves students re-working journaling texts to tell the story of the development of their research and writing in a cycle. It may include an introduction, discussion, and

question-raising conclusion. See Table 1 further below in this article.



thinking through their understanding of what they were researching. Regular journaling would also let them develop a large body of writing that they could draw on for planning and writing a first draft of a particular genre. (Students started by writing between 120-150 words, but most were soon producing 160-200 words or more in each journaling session.) If the students also read and talked about each other's journaling in class each week, this would help them develop a more spontaneous sense of voice in English about the global issues that they were learning about.

A second question that came up for me concerned asking students from the beginning of the course to read and make notes on extended written texts (global issues readers in the Spring semester, and webpages in the Autumn semester) rather than initially using other, more popular, and less text-based sources of information for note-taking, explanation and discussion (for example, images, videos, slogans, quotations, and campaigns to do with global issues). Although the use of global issues readers in the Spring semester provided a common curriculum focus as well as solid support for students who might otherwise experience some initial difficulties with learning through English about particular global issues, limiting the focus on any global issue mainly to a 30-page reader risked becoming a classic example of "encapsulated learning" (Engeström, 1991; see also Yamazumi, 2006) where what is learnt in the classroom is separated from understanding and experience of the outside world.

Thinking this through led me to a third question directly connected to the diversification of genre: Why not ask students to write in non-academic, personalised ways at the start of the course, and then later in the course have them engage with other, more institutionalised, real-world and academic genres (such as media texts, research narratives, and research reports) so that they would learn to

communicate their understandings of global issues in different ways? Such a broadening of genre would offer students more choice in how they wrote about the global issues that they researched. It might also let them develop a stronger sense of creativity and criticality in writing about different global issues that they were interested in.

By "creativity" I refer here to more than just a general act of imagination to produce or create something new that we conventionally read "creativity" to mean, as in these dictionary definitions:

the ability to use skill and imagination to produce something new or to produce art; the act of doing this (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, undated)

the ability to create new ideas or things using your imagination (Macmillan Dictionary Online, undated).

Rather, from reading Janks's (2010) compelling work on literacy and power, I started to find it useful to think of creativity as signaling a practice of "re-design" or "re-construction" that follows on from deconstructing texts and understanding how texts (including images) position and represent particular views of the world. Janks herself proposes for the development of literacy practices a "redesign cycle" of "*deconstruct-reconstruct-construct*" as shown in Figure 1.

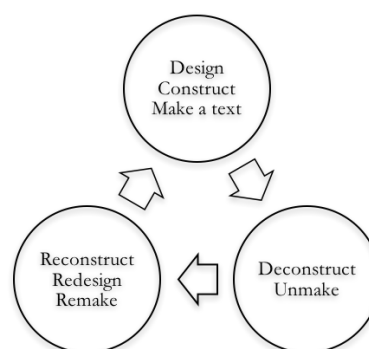


Figure 1. Janks's Redesign Cycle (2010, p. 183).

According to Janks, “A critical approach to writing helps us to think about how texts may be rewritten and how multimodal texts can be redesigned. It enables us to transform texts, to remake the word. If repositioning texts is tied to an ethic of social justice then redesign can contribute to the kind of identity and social transformation that Freire’s work advocates” (Janks, 2010, p.18). Her book, *Literacy and Power* (Janks, 2010), provides many interesting examples of how to work with both creativity and criticality in the development of critical literacy, based on her work in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Coming back to the first-year researching and writing class, I wasn’t yet clear how the changes that I had started imagining might work out in practice, but nevertheless raising these doubts and questions let me tentatively find some new directions. I became more questioning about the students’ ongoing writing development; I had also begun to see that it might make sense to reframe my concerns in terms of “critical literacy development.” That said, it was (and still seems) too early to make such a decision, so in this paper I reformulate these doubts and questions as a set of continuing “puzzles” in an Exploratory Practice (EP) sense<sup>3</sup> in so far as they invite an extended, exploratory consideration:

- Why have an exclusive focus on academic genres?
- What real-world or popular genres might be interesting for students to work with? Why?
- How might students develop greater writing fluency about global issues so that they can more confidently engage with planning, drafting, and re-drafting different writing products?
- What place might images, slogans, and campaigns have in the development of

students’ research and writing about global issues?

- How might students be guided to rework and remake their own writing within the constraints of a particular genre, and, at the same time, develop a critical position about the global issues that they research and write about?
- How might I learn together with my students about their development as it unfolds?

Through the 2015 academic year I discussed these puzzles with different teachers at work, in Learner Development SIG get-togethers, at the JALT2015 International Conference, and at the Creating Community: Learning Together 2 Conference in December 2015. I also talked about them with the students in the 2015 research and writing class. Dipping into the work by Janks (2010), as well as Brookfield (2005) and Crookes (2013), helped me to understand further different critical views about learning and literacy. Brookfield presents a detailed and eloquent analysis of how Western democracies function with deep inequality, which is constantly reproduced “as seeming to be normal, natural and inevitable (thereby heading off potential challenges to the system” (Brookfield, 2006, p. 370). He carefully explores how critical theory can help teachers in adult education address issues of power, alienation, class, racism, and gender. Crookes does much the same in relation to the field of ELT, appealing to readers who “value basic ideals such as equality, democracy, freedom, and solidarity and are looking for a way to bring those fully to bear” (Crookes, 2013, pp. 6-7) in their work. Another important influence for me was the volunteer teacher education work that I did in a completely different context in Burma (see Barfield & Morgan, 2016, this volume)

<sup>3</sup> Allwright & Hanks (2009, p.156) observe: “For EP we find it helpful to think in terms of “puzzles” rather than “problems”, if only to try to capture the difference between something that simply calls for a “solution” and something that is just interesting

and warrants work for understanding. ... This deliberate shift of formulation from “problem to solve” to “puzzle to understand” is a central and highly productive characteristic of EP.”

that let me become clearer about the value of focusing on both criticality and creativity. At the same time, all these different influences and interactions didn't provide any immediate answers for the research and writing course other than to talk about different possibilities for the students' writing and to experiment. In short, a direction had been set, and now it was time to explore.

I continue by presenting some of the different genres that the students tried in 2015, before looking at the "literacy development story" of one student. In the final part of this paper, I raise some further questions about the interplay between criticality and creativity in the development of such literacy practices.

### Experimenting With Different Written Genres

In 2015 students regularly did journaling, writing freely for 20-30 minutes each week about the research that they were doing. Following some broad guidelines that I gave them at the start of the writing stage of each cycle, the students would plan their writing product and draft it by drawing from their research notes and journaling over the previous "research" weeks. As mentioned earlier, this enabled the students to start from a body of writing that they had already completed and to rework it towards particular genre conventions. These conventions were explained in handouts with example modified-authentic texts, which students read and discussed in class in the writing stage of each cycle. In the Autumn semester, students also did jigsaw readings in pairs in class to raise their awareness of different ways of organizing texts. These activities helped sensitize students to the mediation between local and global representations of an issue, as well as

between different voices, interests, and perspectives around an issue—those of individuals, local communities, official positions, as well as counter-positions taken by researchers and civil society actors.

The range of genres diversified over the year, including Personal Diary, Question Sheet, and Visual Report in the Spring semester, and media texts (News Article, Op-Ed/Opinion Piece, and Editorial), Research Narrative, Research Report, and Blog Posts, in the Autumn semester. Table 1 below shows the genres for different research and writing cycles in 2015.

*Table 1.* Range of Genres Across the Year.

<i>Semester</i>	<i>Cycle</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Brief descriptor</i>
Spring	1	Personal Diary	"bringing together your starting interest and thoughts about Global Issues, by presenting and interpreting (a) different images, (b) different sayings, quotes, slogans, and (c) different popular projects, campaigns or organisations to do with global issues/a global issue that you are particularly interested in"
	2	Visual Report	"6-8 steps of analysis with images of a global issue, including a short introduction, discussion, and a short conclusion"
	3	Question Sheet	"6-8 critical questions about a global issue with a well-organized response to each Critical Question, so that the reader can learn about the global issue and understand why it is important to take action"
Autumn	4	News Article	"taking up a local event from individual, group/community, and official points of view about a global issue, using short quotations, and giving a precise picture of the issue, followed by wider analysis"
		Op-Ed/Opinion	"taking up a global event and explaining its importance, before presenting your key argument about the issue both globally and locally"
		Editorial	"arguments against an official or widely accepted position on a global issue, presenting counter-claims with reasons"
	5	any of the above except for Personal Diary, plus: a set of Blog Posts "3 or 4 blog posts, each 200-300 words"	
		Research Narrative	"re-working journaling texts to tell the story of the development of your research in Cycle 5, with an introduction, discussion, and question-raising conclusion"
		Research Report	"problem-solution analysis of a global issue"
		some other genre	... open to discussion and negotiation ...

As can be seen, the genres grew in complexity from Personal Diary in Cycle 1 (focusing on different images, sayings, quotes, slogans, and popular projects, campaigns or organisations to do with a global issue) to Question Sheet in Cycle 3 (a modified form of a FAQ webpage, where the writer raises critical questions about a global issue), to a choice of three different media texts in Cycle 4, and a wider range still in Cycle 5 of what genre to work with. Importantly, Cycle 5 included one option where students could produce a combination of shorter texts (a set of 200- to 300-word blog posts) on the global issue that they researched in case any individual felt that it would be too difficult to write a final text of 800 words on a single issue.

In fact, one student chose to do blog posts because this enabled them to write about different human rights issues rather than limiting their focus to a single global issue. The student wrote three blogs on “Inequality and Discrimination in the World” (the “October 26 Driving Campaign” by women in Saudi Arabia, hate speech in football, and the eradication of child labour). In addition to Blog Posts, examples of student writing in all the other genres listed in Table 1 (except for Personal Diary) can be found on the Global Issues Resources website.<sup>4</sup>

Tables 2 and 3 further below show what genres students chose in Cycles 4 and 5. “News Article” was the most popular choice in Cycle 4, with eight out of 19 students choosing this type of media text as their writing product. In contrast, in Cycle 5, Question Sheet was the first choice of 8 students, with two research genres the next most frequent (Research Report: 4 students; Research Narrative: 2 students). Just two students wrote Blog Posts in the end; a third student started with Blog Posts, but then switched to Research Report in the process

of re-drafting. What was particularly interesting in Cycles 4 and 5 was seeing students within the same class learn from each other not only about a broad variety of global issues, but also about different genres for communicating their understanding to readers as they grappled with the development of diverse literacy practices.

**Table 2.** Cycle 4 Student Choices of Genre.

Genre	Number of students
Editorial	5
Op-Ed/Opinion	6
News Article	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

**Table 3.** Cycle 5 Student Choices of Genre.  
(2 students didn't complete cycle 5)

Genre	Number of students
Editorial	1
Blog Posts	2
Research Narrative	2
Research Report	4
Question Sheet	8
<i>Total</i>	17*

### Learning with the Students

During the year, I tried to talk in each class with three to four students about what they were doing, what questions and puzzles they were exploring, and how they were coping with writing in different genres. For reasons of space I focus here on the literacy development of one student, Reina. I have reconstructed her story from fragments of dialogues with her, my research notes and reflections, extracts from her journals, and her Cycle 4 review. In Cycle 4 Reina decided

<sup>4</sup> See “Student Writing on Global Issues”  
<https://sites.google.com/site/resourcesforglobalresources/student-writing-on-global-issues>



to research and produce a global issues news article about the Syrian refugee crisis. My narrative reconstruction of part of her literacy development reads as follows:

*Reina's interest in refugees has come from watching a video news story on the plight of Syrian refugees (Dialogue 10/07). Reina started out wanting to look at conflict and war situations in other countries. She was also interested in the new security law in Japan (Journal 12): her first research notes don't have a single focus on refugees. In her second journal, she commented: "Japan is far from Syria, but we can deliver food, water, and other necessities, so I think we should do first what we can do." (Journal 13). Reina started to look at the specific issue of EU countries refusing to accept refugees, and she records in her notes (Research Notes 2) arguments made against refugees, as well as the counterarguments in favour of refugees being accepted: "Secondly they think that the number of refugees will exceed the population in a few decades because the birth rate in Europe are low. Actually, even though the birth rates are higher among Muslims, they drop out and adjust as the standard of living and level of education rise." (Journal 14)*

*Reina wondered why the Gulf States refuse to accept Syrian refugees. In her writing, she reasons that they "don't have the concept of a refugee" (Journal 15) and Gulf States are "concerned about their nation's security" (Journal 15). She feels that "it is important that we do not criticize the Gulf states but work on them patiently" (Journal 15). Her other research question is "What can we do for refugees?"*

*Reina opts for "Global Issues News Article", and, talking with me, she explains that she wants to look at the situation in Syria deeply and find the voices of refugees (Dialogue 10/21). Later, in her Review, at the end of the research and writing cycle, Reina notes: "I wrote 'News Article'. This type needs quotation from the individuals, so I searched them by watching videos and using the internet ... I read many articles written by Reuters, the Guardian, and so on. When I found information I want to know, I became very happy." (Review) In talking with*

*Reina, I question her about her first-draft conclusion, which said, "The organizations such as UNHCR and AAR are working hard, so each of us should know about their work and cooperate with them." (Draft 2) I respond in a comment to her: "It's a typical thing that we say, but what does it mean? I would encourage you to use a different phrase here and explain more. Yes, we can (and it is a good thing to do so too) support actors like the UNHCR and AAR, but what do we also need to do so that we help change the public understanding of refugees in the civil society and private and public networks that we are part of? What actions can we take? How?" (Draft 2 Comment) Reina doesn't reply, but she changes the ending substantially. She concludes her end-of-cycle review: "This cycle's writing was very, very difficult for me, but I got a of good things to me through this writing process." (Review).*

One of the interesting aspects of Reina's story is how her research steps up a gear at the moment of deciding what genre she is going to use to redesign her understanding of the issue that she has researched. The choice of "news article" requires that she find (and/or create) quotations by different actors so that she can give voice to different perspectives and positions about the refugee crisis. Reina articulates her need to find quotations very clearly, and she uses both video and text information sources to find appropriate voices. At a conventional level of academic literacy, her clarity of purpose may stand in marked contrast to the familiar struggles that many first-year students have with the use of quotation in academic genres.<sup>5</sup> Another aspect of Reina's story of literacy that deserves comment is the affective dimension. Reina expresses a feeling of happiness in searching and finding quotations, as well as a sense of achievement in completing her research and writing a global issues news article. It appears that the creative challenge of producing a media text with global, local, and individual perspectives helps Reina to imagine what might be done

<sup>5</sup> The final draft of Reina's global issues news article is available online. See

<https://sites.google.com/site/resourcesforglobalresources/student-writing-on-global-issues/news-articles/refugees>

more concretely on refugees' behalf and to gain some sense of emotional satisfaction in redesigning her news article with those perspectives and voices.

From a critical point of view, Reina's story shows her moving between nation-state perspectives (Japan, Syria, the EU, Gulf states), the concerns of international and global and local actors such as the UNHCR and the Association for Aid and Relief (AAR)<sup>6</sup>, and her own position. Who she includes as part of her collective position appears to change as she takes different positions on the issue: To what extent does the "we" in "we can deliver food, water, and other necessities, so I think we should do first what we can do" overlap with the "each of us" in "so each of us should know about their work and cooperate with them"? The closing part of her finalised news article reads as follows:

*The organizations such as UNHCR and AAR are working hard, so each of us should know about their work. Reporters of newspaper or magazine should interview members of organization, write their work on articles and tell readers how useful their work is. Especially, young people are not so interested in this problem, so it will be make a difference to write about conditions refugees are facing and work of organizations on magazines which young people read.* (Global Issues Resources, 2016b)

Reina imagines it is possible to make a difference by writing (locally?) about what problems refugees face and what work humanitarian organisations are doing on their behalf; yet, her individual agency is hidden. Re-reading her story and considering how her global issues news article positions her and others raises interesting questions not only about the development of critical literacy in student

research and writing on global issues, but also about how the "global (imaginary)" is locally reproduced and re-designed in individual literacy practices.<sup>7</sup>

### Connections and Questions

In this short paper I have tried to trace a fundamental shift in my pedagogy and understanding of what an engagement with global issues through writing may begin to entail where students are asked to try a diverse range of academic and real-world genres *and* exercise choice over the genres that they wish to use for communicating their research to others. This shift helps break out of the confines of "encapsulated learning" that an excessive focus on academic genre conventions can involve. It moves our attention towards an expansive engagement with making, deconstructing, and re-designing texts where students can learn to work creatively and critically on the development of their literacy practices. The exploration presented in this paper represents an initial—and incomplete—attempt to probe what we might call "the creative-critical dynamic" in student research and writing about global issues. Many interesting puzzles remain to explore, and, drawing on the perspectives of both Exploratory Practice (Allwright & Hanks, 2009) and Critical Literacy (Janks, 2010, p.19), they include:

*"How might students be guided to deconstruct, creatively re-design, and make texts within the constraints of particular genres, and multimodally re-write their own critical position about the global issues that they research so that they pose questions, educate others, take action, and/or raise public awareness towards establishing greater social justice?"*

<sup>6</sup> AAR is an NGO that was founded in 1979 to assist refugees in post-conflict Cambodia. For more details see <http://www.aarjapan.gt.jp/english/about/>

<sup>7</sup> See Kamola, 2014, for a broader discussion of how "global imaginaries" are re-produced in higher education.

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