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The JALT Learner Development SIG 30th Anniversary Conference Post-Conference Publication

edited by Tim Ashwell

Learning for Change and Action, Making a Difference for the Future

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Coordinator's Introduction

The JALT Learner Development SIG's 30th anniversary conference was held at Gakushuin University, Tokyo, on October 21st and 22nd 2023. It resulted from collaboration with the JALT Global Issues in Language Education and the Teacher Development SIGs. Before I explain the theme, I would like to remember those LD SIG members who passed since the 20th anniversary conference, LD20.

In the 10 years since LD20, we sadly lost two dear friends of the LD SIG, Richard Silver and Naoko Aoki, both in 2018. Richard Silver was heavily involved in the LD SIG committee. He helped organize the Realizing Autonomy conference and later the 20th anniversary conference, and was SIG co-coordinator with Andy Barfield from 2011 to 2013. Through LD20 I had the pleasure of meeting Richard — I was on the website team, and he was one of the conference co-chairs. From the contact we had during the run-up to the conference, he was supportive and quick to offer solutions to problems that came up, but it was not until after the conference that we really got a chance to speak face-to-face. It was great to meet Richard; I still remember the videos he shared that his students made as part of their projects. I only later found out about his illness, and thus, his passing came as a total shock.

In the same year as Richard's passing, the LD SIG also lost Naoko Aoki, one of the founding members of the LD SIG (alongside Richard Smith). Although we did not have much contact, I remember her plenary at LD20, "Stories to take home," which challenged us to share "true" stories about our teaching that went beyond the cover stories that we sometimes use to portray ourselves as "certain, expert professionals" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.15). She encouraged us to share our stories of practice with someone near to us, with the intention that we would further develop the stories we told into written form.

To find out more about both Richard Silver and Naoko Aoki, please see these dedications, "In Memory of Richard Silver": https://ld-sig.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Dedication.pdf, and "Remembering Naoko Aoki Together": https://ld-sig.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Dedication_Naoko.pdf.

When I took on the coordinator role at the AGM in 2022, I soon realized that the LD SIG would again reach another milestone. To develop a theme, I met with Andy Barfield to brainstorm ideas. As we shared ideas, reflected on the events in the world that had happened since 2013, and how these had influenced our teaching in the classroom, we both agreed that the theme for LD30 should acknowledge how we had, in a sense, re-focused our work with our students from purely language learning to learning with a purpose. Like many other teachers we knew, we encouraged our learners to gain knowledge and understanding about themselves or the world around them so that they could more effectively deal with the challenges they would face in the coming years. This led to the conference theme, "Learning for Change and Action, Making a Difference for the Future."

For LD30, the LD SIG welcomed back Phil Benson, Honorary Professor in Applied Linguistics in the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University, Sydney, as a plenary speaker, who enthusiastically spoke about "Turns, Terms and Reconceptualization in Language Teaching and Learning Research" as well as held an informative workshop on "Language Learning Beyond the Classroom." We also invited two long-time members of the LD SIG, Stacey Vye and Chiyuki Yanase, to give a joint dialogic

plenary on “Fostering Learner Wellbeing Through Autonomy: The Role of Learning Communities.” Stacey Vye also held a workshop on “Autonomy, Creativity and Innovation for Learners and Teachers Alike.” Not forgetting, of course, Taichi Ichikawa, who was invited from outside the LD community to share how young leaders worldwide are working hard to realize the Sustainable Development Goals in their local communities. In addition to these plenary sessions, the conference featured 22 concurrent sessions by teachers and 15 concurrent sessions by students over the two days.

The success of LD30 would not have been possible without the hard work of the conference team, the presenters themselves (and those who supported them), and everyone who came to participate. Many thanks also to the International Social Sciences Faculty of Gakushuin University, especially our site chair Kay Irie, who also managed the registration desk, and Ted O’Neill, who joined the conference team at just the right moment and was on hand to help with any technical problems during the conference. I would also like to thank Jennie Roloff Rothman of the GILE SIG who did a great job managing the registration desk and liaising with Phil Benson. And, of course, a big thank you to Jon Thomas, Ross Sampson, and Jason Hobman of the TD SIG who also contributed at various points in organizing the conference.

James Underwood
LD30 Conference Chair, on behalf of the LD30 Committee: *Andy Barfield, Ken Ikeda, Nicholas Emerson, Patrick Kiernan, Robert Moreau & Tim Ashwell.*
February 13th 2024

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Editor's Introduction

The 18 articles in this Special Issue of *Learning Learning* were written by teachers and students who attended the LD SIG's 30th Anniversary Conference in October 2023. Apart from the two final student reflections, all the contributions relate to the sessions the writers ran at the conference. After working hard to prepare their sessions and to present, the contributors worked in peer-support groups to develop the first draft of their article and then passed this on to four external reviewers who either responded 'blind' to the article, or dialogued openly with the author in accordance with the author's choice of review type. Finally, writers received my feedback as they worked towards the finished article. The process was quite intense and coincided with Christmas, New Year, and the end of term for most people, so I would like to thank all the contributors for their hard work and dedication in getting everything done on time. I would also like to thank the four external reviewers – Ivan Lombardi, Amelia Yarwood, Henry Foster, and Lynda-Gay McFarlane, who very efficiently provided some excellent feedback.

The articles in this Post-Conference Publication are divided into five sections. In the first section, 'Projects Beyond the Classroom', the main focus of the authors is how to make connections with local communities and the wider world, often through project-based learning, so that learners can take action to effect change. In the first article, Tosh Tachino provides an introduction to the ideas behind action-oriented language instruction and shows how many of the sessions at the LD30 Conference involved teachers wanting to challenge their learners to learn from experiences outside the classroom. Chris Hennessy and Ivan Lombardi have had their students engage in community revitalisation projects for a number of years now and describe how they have found their students taking ever more control of their learning as they, the teachers, have gradually stood back. Neil Cowie describes a Master's level course in which international students have explored how local businesses implement SDG goals and how practices may relate back to their home communities. In the last two articles, Peter Lutes describes a development project in rural Cambodia in which English language education will play a key role, while Kurt Ackermann discusses the potential of Citizen Science projects that will take his students outside the confines of the classroom to understand better how environmental activism can work in practice.

Richard Walker's first contribution to this collection provides a bridge to the second section which brings together contributions that focus more clearly on 'Course Development', specifically courses at university. In his article, Richard describes how a course grew out of a Model United Nations group he began to advise and how students have either benefited directly from MUN participation or from the new courses he has developed. Next, Ivan Lombardi reports on what happened when he handed over control of course design to his students, providing a valuable account of the pros and cons of a truly negotiated syllabus. In the following article, Adrienne Johnson and Cecilia Smith explain how they have revised an English-medium seminar course to deepen the academic research skills their students gain and make them more transferable. In his second contribution to this volume, Richard Walker argues for the utility of introducing 'intangible cultural practices' to undergraduate students, and to round off this section, Sarah Deutchman describes how she has

introduced vocabulary learning apps to encourage her students to study independently outside class hours.

The two articles in the third section, 'Teacher Research', are not connected to course development, but rather deal with topics that have a wider, more universal scope. In his article, Jason Hobman looks at foreign language classroom anxiety. He interprets the responses his students gave to several Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale items and makes suggestions about how teachers can spot signs of anxiety and deal with them. In the second article, Darcey Barge draws on her insight as a former *Eikaiwa* conversation school teacher to look at how experiences of role conflict and role ambiguity may lead to professional burnout among *Eikaiwa* teachers.

In the fourth section, 'Student Presentations', Kakeru Tojo, Yuiko Asai and Mako Narita showcase their research and report on what they learned from their LD presentations. Kakeru explains about a pronunciation evaluation system he designed in the early stages of his Master's course. Yuiko's article reports on field work carried out in Australia to understand more deeply the ways in which Aboriginal peoples are fighting to protect their rights, heritage and language. And Mako writes about a project she has been engaged in at university to find ways to reduce food waste and loss.

In the final section, we include three reflection pieces. The first is by Devon Arthurson who evaluates how a novel LD30 Conference format, "learning café", worked for her and the participants in her session. The last two reflections are from two students, Chisato Ozawa and Hiromu Sano, who attended a conference for the first time. Reading their pieces proves, I think, how worthwhile it was to celebrate the LD SIG's 30th anniversary in this way by inviting students to participate and, if they wished, to present.

The range of approaches and reflections contained in this collection is broad and diverse in a typical LD SIG way, but I believe it is possible to see how all these articles relate in their various ways to the LD30 Conference theme of 'Learning for Change and Action, Making a Difference for the Future'. Please enjoy reading the inspiring work that LD SIG members are engaged in and discover connections, hints, or puzzles that help you make a difference for the future.

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February 4th 2024

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Language Instruction to Change the World: Possibilities for Action-Oriented Language Instruction in Your Classroom

ABSTRACT

Action-oriented language instruction (AOLI) is a teaching approach that aims to make language learning impactful beyond the classroom and contribute to building a better world. Rooted in the philosophies of Dewey, Decroly, and Freinet, AOLI now uses Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) descriptors and focuses on realistic, authentic tasks that foster learner agency and embrace complexity. While challenges exist for implementing AOLI in Japan, many teachers are already taking steps to address these challenges. This article reports on those efforts presented at the LD30 Conference and other recent conferences, as well as the brainstorming session that took place during the author's LD30 Conference session. Through discussions of these ideas, this article provides additional suggestions for bringing AOLI into our classrooms and making our teaching more impactful one step at a time.

Keywords: action-oriented language instruction, EFL pedagogy in Japan, SDGs

Many of us wish to make our day-to-day teaching matter more, not only in terms of helping our students learn but also in terms of making a better world. This wish was reflected in the LD30 Conference theme "Learning for Change and Action, Making a Difference for the Future," and I attended many sessions in which speakers presented their efforts to realize this goal. My contribution to the conference and to this volume is to introduce action-oriented language instruction (AOLI) and suggest ideas to increase our positive impact on the world through our teaching. To this end this article begins with a description of AOLI, followed by a report from my conference session, along with instructions on how to implement AOLI in your classroom. Then, the article addresses challenges to implementing AOLI in Japan through what I learned from this and other conferences about what people are already doing in Japan.

ACTION-ORIENTED LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Acar (2019) characterizes action-oriented language instruction (AOLI) as having the dual aim of teaching languages and educating citizens for a democratic society with the emphasis that the first aim is subservient to the second. He traces its theoretical grounding to the philosophies of Dewey, Decroly, and Freinet and notes its present practices as most closely associated with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The most recent edition of the CEFR companion document (North, et al., 2022) describes AOLI as having the following seven characteristics: rejection of a grammar-based linear syllabus, objectives inspired by CEFR

descriptors, realistic and authentic tasks, learner agency, focus on the task rather than language, authentic materials with scaffolding, and acceptance of complexity by teachers and learners. What these characteristics mean for us teachers is that we need to start with learners' lives and what's relevant to them, and align their interests with what the world needs. To the extent possible we want to let the learners take the initiative in choosing their projects and relevant CEFR "can-do" statements (Council of Europe, 2020) in consultation with us, the teachers. These descriptors should serve as both language goals and transparent assessment criteria.

Piccardo (2014) emphasizes the use of "authentic materials" in AOLI, but "authenticity" is a deeply problematic notion. A grammar substitution exercise is a classic case for inauthentic language use, but it can be legitimate in the context of an EFL classroom, thus "authentic." Pinner (2016) argues that authenticity should be reconceptualized as "a socially mediated and contextually dynamic process of investment" (p. 8). He sees authenticity in continua as it relates to motivation and autonomy, and he argues that the material becomes more authentic if it relates to the learner personally as an individual. Following Pinner's argument, we should choose "authentic" materials based on how relevant they are to our learners' lives and to the projects they choose to undertake.

The above description of AOLI incorporates elements of other approaches, such as task-based learning (TBL), project-based learning (PBL), content and language integrated learning (CLIL), service learning, and experiential learning among others. These overlaps exist because they all arose out of dissatisfaction in the traditional grammar-based language instruction, and they all share their roots in communicative language teaching.

In the sections that follow, I report what transpired in my session at the LD30 Conference, and I show how AOLI offers a particular lens to imagine certain possibilities in our pedagogical practices.

POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION-ORIENTED LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

During my conference session, I invited the participants to discuss how they could incorporate AOLI in their current environment in Japan, and they came up with several themes. Peter Chin and Jennie Roloff Rothman started a lively conversation on fair trade as a theme. Buying decisions are certainly something that contemporary Japanese university students can relate to in their everyday lives, and fair trade is connected to larger issues of fair pay, labor, and capitalism. But the present practice of fair trade itself is also problematic, Rothman argued, since the farmers still receive very little of the fair-trade price. A theme on fair trade within an English class or a CLIL class on business or economics has the potential to engage learners and transform them to become more critical and responsible citizens, and their actions could contribute to addressing the problem in the long term. To make the class action-oriented, however, I suggest incorporating an assignment where the learner must make at least one conscious buying decision and reflect on that choice: Why did they choose to spend their money there? Where do they think their money will go? What do they hope that their money will contribute to in the end? The act of spending their own money would make them realize that our lessons are relevant outside the classroom and that they can act upon the world through seemingly mundane choices.

Richard Walker raised charity as another possible theme, which also can be taught as a CLIL class in business or economics. Like fair trade, charity is a complex issue, and simply giving money to charity does not solve all the problems. One can also argue that the root cause of poverty is capitalism or its present manifestation of it, and charity is a tool used by the beneficiaries of the system to placate the economically oppressed and distract their attention from systemic reforms (like wage reforms) or an outright revolution against capitalism (Ashford, 2018). We can hope that such a discussion may spark learner interest in charity and help learners think about why charity is needed in the first place and what we could do to address the fundamental problems. To make the class action-oriented, I suggest requiring the learner to donate something, be it money, goods, labor, or time. This assignment can lead to a further discussion on their choices: Why did you choose this charity? What did you choose to volunteer and why? What did you learn as a result of your action? Would you consider doing it

again? Why (not)? I agree with William James (1890), who conceptualized a person's character as an accumulation of all the small choices throughout one's lives. By making our students actually perform these actions that are consistent with their values, we are helping them become the people they aspire to be.

But how can we design an action-oriented language class for our particular learners who may have limited language proficiency and perhaps limited world knowledge? North et al. (2022) suggest the following steps:

1. Identify learners' real-life communicative needs by considering the contexts learners are likely to encounter.
2. Establish clear and specific goals for the lesson and use the CEFR descriptors to define these goals.
3. Work with learners to create a scenario that simulates a real-life situation.
4. Incorporate specific language skills (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, communicative strategies).
5. Set conditions and constraints for the task.
6. Incorporate assessment tools using CEFR descriptors.

Starting with the learners' needs and contexts is the key to making the task relevant, but teachers should consider pushing the learners a little both in terms of their language and their world knowledge. The CEFR descriptors are often the most useful starting point because they have "can do" statements at all levels. For the sake of example, the following tables are given to show different "can do" statements for informal and formal discussions for learners in the B2-A2 range.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION (WITH FRIENDS)

Descriptor Numbers	Levels	Descriptions
462	B2	Can account for and sustain their opinions in discussion by providing relevant explanations, arguments and comments.
465	B1+	Can explain why something is a problem.
471	B1	Can express beliefs, opinions and agreement and disagreement politely.
473	A2+	Can exchange opinions and compare things and people using simple language.

FORMAL DISCUSSION (MEETINGS)

Descriptor Numbers	Levels	Descriptions
495	B2	Can contribute, account for and sustain their opinion, evaluate alternative proposals and make and respond to hypotheses.
498	B1	Can take part in routine formal discussion of familiar subjects which is clearly articulated in the standard form of the language or a familiar variety and which involves the exchange of factual information, receiving instructions or the discussion of solutions to practical problems.
502	A2	Can express what they think about things when addressed directly in a formal meeting, provided they can ask for repetition of key points if necessary.

Finding the level-appropriate descriptors allows us to find Krashen's (1985) "i + 1," the kind of language input that learners can manage with scaffolding, and these descriptors should guide us in designing the language components of the task.

A similar approach can be used for learners themselves. We may lament our learners' limited life experience or world knowledge, but we still have to take them as they are. Our job is to push them a little, expose them to the world but only to the extent they can handle. That may not be much, but we are still helping the learners to push their limit to become what they can be for the time being.

More detailed instructions on how to teach AOLI can be found in the handbook *From Communicative to Action-Oriented* (Piccardo, 2014), and a lesson plan template is available online (Piccardo & Hunter, 2021).

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING ACTION-ORIENTED LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN JAPAN

It is true that there are challenges to implementing AOLI in Japan. Hirose (2022), for example, argued for the existence of a number of challenges, which can be summarized as the following: Japan is a high-context, collectivist culture with strong top-down power relationships, and the Japanese are uncomfortable with dialogue-style discussions. In particular, they lack the skill to ask good, probing questions, fearing that such questions disrupt group harmony.

Whether or not these stereotypically Japanese characteristics are overstated, many of us, language teachers in Japan, already recognize the need to address these issues, and we are already doing many things to overcome these challenges. At a recent CUE SIG conference, Christopher Modell (2023) presented little tricks he uses in his classroom to prod his learners to speak up and make positive contributions, and at our LD30 conference, Dexter da Silva and Ted O'Neil held a learning café to explore how to ask good questions. Adrienne Johnson and Cecilia Smith Fujishima presented project-based learning that emphasizes developing learners' critical thinking, especially their ability to recognize the divergent perspectives of multiple stakeholders (see their chapter in this volume). Many presenters discussed their work grounded in SDGs. Neil Cowie (see his chapter in this volume) presented his work on coordinating an international SDG Master's program that involved international students visiting local Japanese organizations and reflecting on SDG practices that could be applied in their home countries.

Also at the LD30 Conference, social activist Taichi Ichikawa narrated his personal journey of finding his mission to turn the world into one big school and how he set up his organization called World Road Inc. His most recent book, *We Have a Dream* (World Dream Project, 2021), is a collection of aspirations by young people around the world, intended as a textbook on SDGs to be used by learners around the world. He told us about a global youth movement called "One Young World," through which many young people today are trying to make meaningful changes for the better. Another language textbook that uses SDGs was recently put together by Goodmacher (2023), who incorporates AOLI. In his chapter on food waste, for example, he asks the learners to make a list of food and drink items they typically throw away (e.g., apple cores) and look into ways to use them (p. 65).

At another recent conference on "Peace as Global Language," Paul Duffill (2023) inspired us with the idea of teaching peace studies as a CLIL class, and Tom Fast (2021, 2023) described his involvement with the Japan University English Model United Nations (JUEMUN), which is "an annual, collaborative and student-organized conference held in the Kansai region of Japan" (Japan University English Model United Nations, n.d.). Fast's students researched gender inequality in Japan, and they drafted resolutions as themselves, i.e. concerned young women who would have to live with gender inequality in Japan. They submitted their resolutions with recommendations to the Okayama prefectural government, they testified in front of the government officials, and many of

their recommendations were actually adopted as prefectural laws in Okayama. This is a perfect example of AOLI in action.

All these examples show that Hirose's (2022) obstacles are not impenetrable walls, and at the LD30 Conference Sylvain Bergeron invoked Parker Palmer's (2007) "Courage to Teach" to discuss what it takes for us, teachers, to take the lead in changing the world by involving our students in SDG projects and encouraging them to go further on their own.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

"Language instruction to change the world" is a grand proposition, and there are certainly great programs we admire that live up to that label. But those big programs may discourage us, thinking we cannot possibly mount such a grand project. On the other hand, modest and achievable actions may seem too small to make a difference. When dealing with big issues like helping the world, I agree with popular author Colin Beavan (2016), who wrote *How to be alive: A guide to the kind of happiness that helps the world*. What's most important is taking the first step, no matter how small. The question you should ask is not whether your action will make a difference but whether your action will make you happy. A simple lesson on giving directions can be turned into a lesson in kindness by assigning a task to actually help someone who looks visibly lost on the street. I know there are a lot of people who are looking for directions in Tokyo not only because I see them all the time but also because I am one of them. Think about the times in which you wished someone had offered you a hand. Could you make an assignment out of that? It will make a difference to that person—and perhaps to the student too.

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Fostering Student Independence Through a Community Revitalization PBL Course

ABSTRACT

This article describes a recurring Project-Based Learning (PBL) course based on learner discovery of local issues and community revitalization at the University of Fukui. From 2021 to 2023, PBL students worked with a local experiential travel organization to promote its activities and the surrounding area to a domestic and international audience. In the 2021 iteration, students focused on multilingual promotion using SNS platforms due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. From 2022 onward, learners researched the challenges faced by organizations and institutions in the area and worked with them and relevant government agencies to create multilingual events and promotion pamphlets. In this article, we will introduce the overall context and the structure of the course and discuss the development of metacognitive skills and independent action in learners through learner perspectives and our own observations.

Keywords: PBL, student independence, learner development, community engagement

CONTEXT

Community revitalization is one of the pillars of the School of Global and Community Studies (GCS) at the University of Fukui. As the official website states, “the revitalization of local economies has become an urgent task as even local businesses expand into more global activities” (para. 1). As a response to this call, we developed a project-based learning (PBL) course that investigates the untapped potential of the Fukui community and introduces lesser-known attractions, experiential activities, and local revitalization efforts to an international audience. The Educational Goals of the department mention this as one of the objectives of the GCS program: “We want students to have the ability to investigate various complex issues involving local community and global society, and train them to be resources with holistic and practical knowhow to engage in problem-solving and contribute to the development of the local community and the global society” (para. 1). In this article, we will tell the story of how our students developed metacognitive skills and independence in our PBL course.

THE ROLE OF PBL WITHIN THE GCS CURRICULUM

Ours is not the only PBL course that GCS students take – in fact, PBL is recognized as a pillar of our department. All students enroll in PBL courses in their first, second, and third year, with some PBL projects spanning multiple semesters to two years. To emphasize the importance of PBL in the curriculum, the GCS website states that, "[t]hrough *a curriculum centered on Project-Based Learning*, students will understand society in the real world and acquire the independent skills to adapt to changing circumstances while developing critical thinking skills and decision-making for pursuing and solving challenges" (para. 4 [our emphasis]).

In their second year, GCS students can choose which PBL course/project they will join. The course we co-facilitate is the only one available in the second year involving an English component and accepts international students in an attempt to capture the spirit of connecting the local community with global perspectives.

WHAT IS PBL?

Our interpretation of PBL is that of *project*- rather than problem-based learning. However, our choice of projects stems from issues that are affecting the Fukui area, in line with the GCS philosophy. Simultaneously and in tune with the theme of the LD30 conference, we focus on the centrality of the learners, the interactions among them and other stakeholders, and their efforts leading to the final product. Rather than conforming to one monolithic definition of PBL, our approach integrates underlying concepts in the literature with the context of the department and the area we work in.

We refined our style in conducting PBL over several iterations of the course and experimented with different balances of facilitator control and learner autonomy, different degrees of scaffolding, and different emphases on skill learning and fieldwork. Based on our previous experiences and observations, we will introduce two models we believe can support learner independence as learners develop their projects. Then, we will provide an overview of how we adopted each of the two models in previous PBL courses. Finally, we will explain how these influenced the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 iterations of our PBL – which we call the *Deep Fukui* project.

THE GENESIS OF *DEEP FUKUI*: TWO MODELS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Creating a community revitalization PBL course involves ideating a project and the path for it to come to realization. We think there are two models (and a whole range in between them) that can be realistically adopted for a course intended to be relevant in the community while fostering student growth. While the two models will eventually converge as the learners start engaging in on-site research and project development, they stem from profoundly different starting points. We call these two original models, the *up-and-running* model and the *got-nothing* model.

THE UP-AND-RUNNING MODEL (2017-2018 PBL)

The "up-and-running model" is designed for learners to have a quick entry into their PBL project. This is achieved by them joining a project that has already been set up by the facilitators, and in which the outcome of the project and external stakeholders have been established in advance. Here we will break down schematically how we achieved this in one past course.

1. The facilitators create the relationship with the cooperating organizations

The theme of this particular PBL course was 地酒 (*jizake*, local sake). We found local sake breweries, restaurants, and shops willing to cooperate in a domestic and international promotion project.

2. Facilitators and learners negotiate the needs of the cooperating organizations

We facilitated the first contact between the learners and the organization they chose to research and promote. This was to ensure that the learners understood the needs of the organization and the nature and predetermined outcomes of the project.

3. Learners gather information

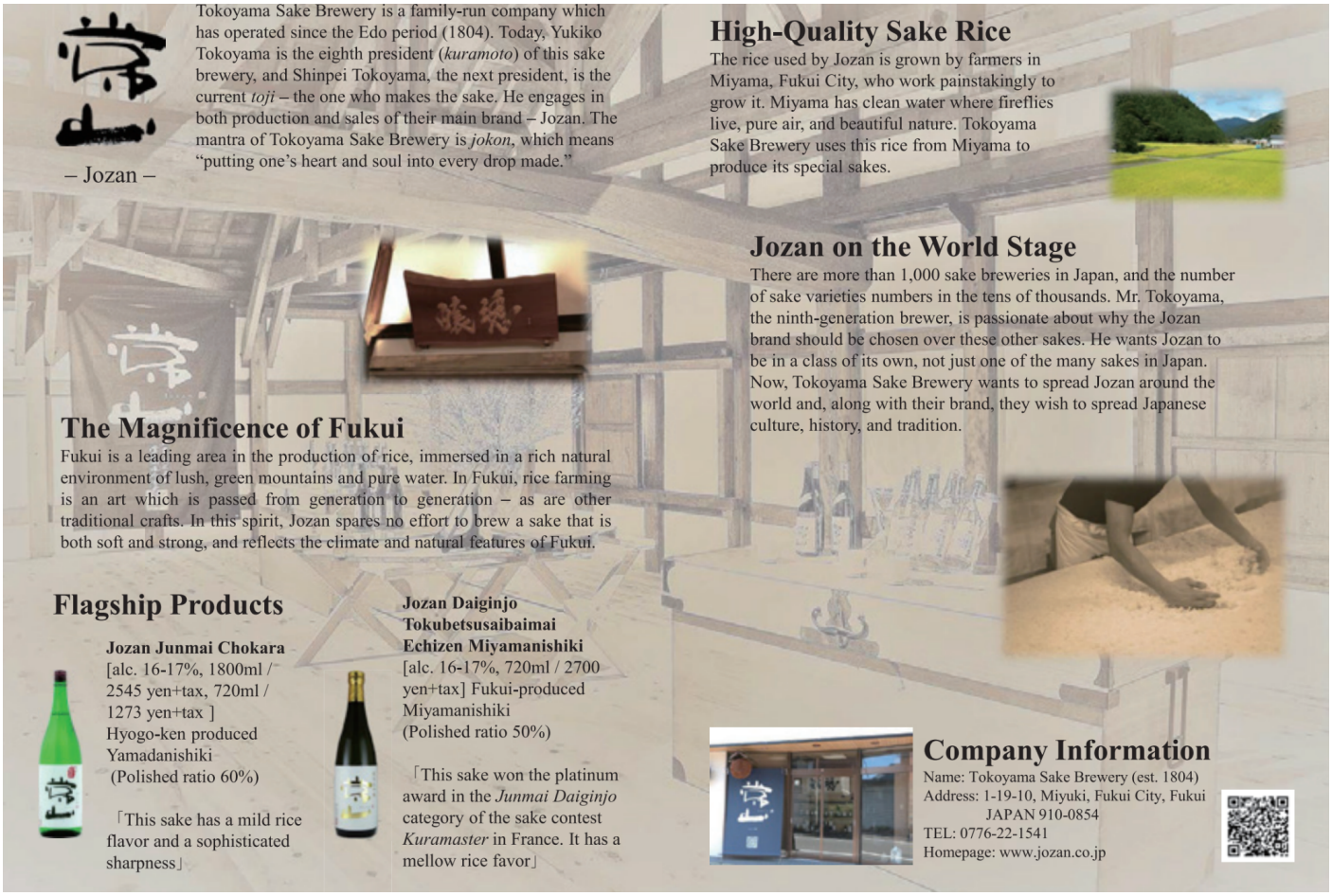
Working in teams, students visited rice fields, sake breweries, and specialty stores and conducted interviews on-site to learn more about the cycle of sake production and the issues the industry faces with the decrease in popularity of sake and dwindling sales.

4. Implement the promotion

Learners collected their findings in two promotional pamphlets (English and Japanese versions) of their production and design (see Artifact 1). They also engaged in public relations regarding distribution of the pamphlets.

5. Present and review the results

The learners presented their project development and the final product at a large-scale presentation event at the university before engaging in reflection on their achievements and the challenges they had faced.



Artifact 1: Sake x Fukui (2017-2018 PBL pamphlet cover and sample page)

THE GOT-NOTHING MODEL (2018-2019 PBL)

At the opposite end of the spectrum is another PBL style which we refer to as the "got-nothing" model. In this context, the learners explore a theme – in this example our selection was 体験 (*taiken*, hands-on experience) – without a predetermined idea of the issues they will tackle. On the contrary, they *find* an issue that catches their interest and can realistically contribute something towards. Similarly, they launch themselves into the project with no previously established contact or relationship. Below we explain how we implemented this model in 2018-2019.

1. Brainstorming session

At the beginning of the project, the group of learners brainstormed about and researched many *taiken* experiences offered in Fukui City and surrounding towns. They identified a number they wanted to promote to domestic and international tourists.

2. Students approach the organizations

After dividing into small teams, the learners selected strategies to make first contact with their chosen local organization and deliberate on the potential of collaborating towards a promotional project.

3. Learners gather information

The learners split into small teams to visit the organization they had contacted. There, they experienced the organization's *taiken* (practical experience activity) first-hand and learned about the organization and its current challenges through interviews with representatives.

4. Implement the promotion

Possibly inspired by the final product of the previous PBL iteration, the learners opted to report the results of their research in the form of a promotional pamphlet in English (see Artifact 2).

5. Present and review the results

As in the previous year, this group of learners presented the final product of their research in presentation form at the end of the semester. Prior to that, they engaged in self- and peer-assessment to reflect on the PBL process and final result.

Artifact 2: Fukui Xperience – やってみよっさ (2018-2019 PBL pamphlet cover and sample page).

LEARNER INDEPENDENCE AND THE TWO MODELS

Reflecting on two years of PBL and planning for more to come, we reviewed our approach to PBL and our roles as course facilitators. This was not an easy endeavor, as we realized that the learners as individuals, with their diverse personalities, motivation, understanding and acceptance of the

PBL principles are major factors in the success of the project. We also determined that the course structure and logistics should support the learners' ability to make decisions freely, take risks, and learn from their experiences. To achieve this, we found ourselves gravitating towards the got-nothing model, which was the foundation for the two PBL iterations introduced in the next section.

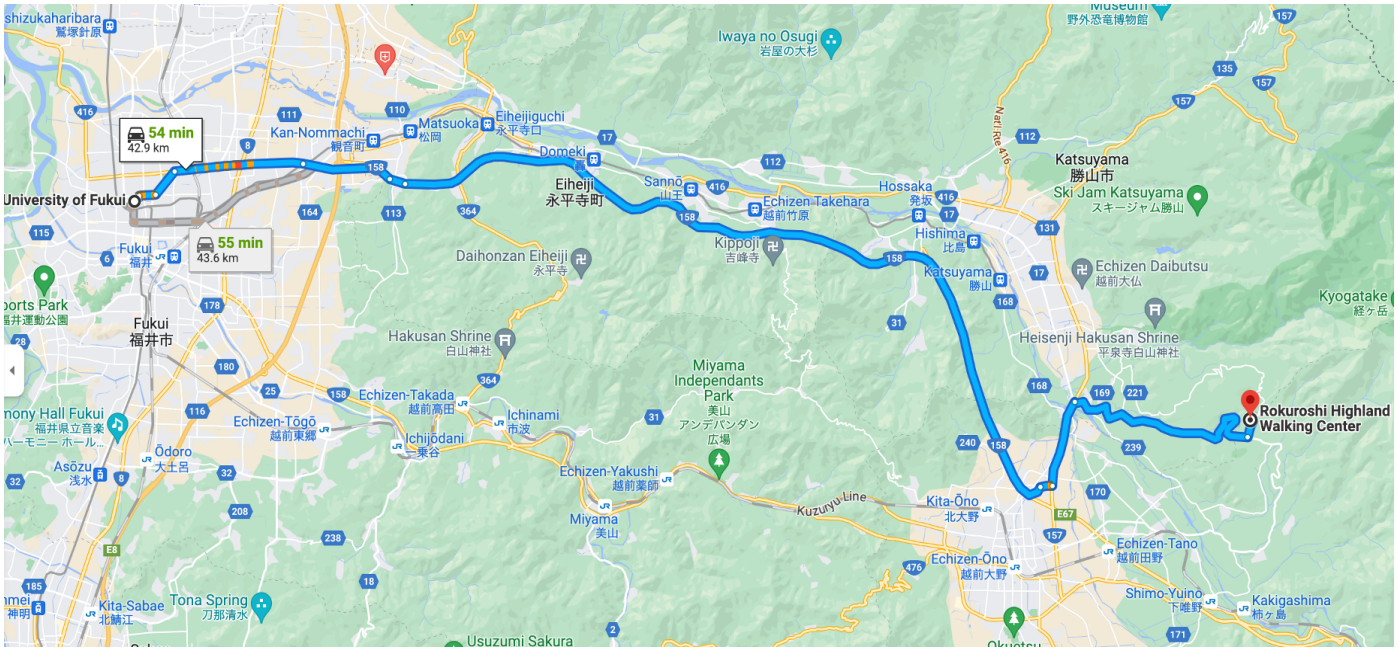
THE *DEEP FUKUI* PROJECT AND COURSE LOGISTICS

We first proposed the *Deep Fukui* PBL course as a framework that could be filled in with different yearly projects, all bound together by the common outcome of promoting local Fukui culture and experiences and providing multilingual PR support for audiences in Japan and abroad. The name *Deep Fukui* also encapsulates the essence of a project asking students to bring their research and PR talents to places beyond the well-known tourist spots in Fukui and find local hidden gems.

EXPLORING ROKUROSHI PLATEAU

Both iterations are based on the got-nothing model and have seen two separate groups of learners engage in the promotion of an experiential travel organization located in 六呂師高原 (*Rokuroshi kōgen*, Rokuroshi Highland), a remote location in an underserved area in the 奥越 (*Okuetsu*) region of Fukui Prefecture. The learners' on-site connection is an organization concerned with nature education and ecotourism, which offers an array of guided forest tours, work-stay programs, and *taiken* experiences in direct contact with nature.

Through fieldwork, the students discovered that Rokuroshi Highland used to be a popular resort area for skiing; now it only has a small number of services, pastures and woods, and stargazing spots. Most importantly, Rokuroshi Highland is an isolated area with limited public transportation, which constitutes the main challenge for community revitalization. Even traveling by car entails an almost one-hour ride from Fukui City center (see Artifact 3), and the steep hills discourage many cyclists. In addition, it is simply not as well-known as other points of interest in the Okuetsu region, like the Dinosaur Museum in Katsuyama City or the Echizen Ono Castle in Ono City.



Artifact 3: Reaching Rokuroshi Highland from Fukui City.

PBL COURSE LOGISTICS

The two iterations described below share the same syllabus (Artifact 4).

> This is a project-based learning (PBL) course in which students will work in teams to research and learn about various local culture and history of Fukui, with the aim of [...] identifying certain challenges in the promotion both domestically and internationally of a local nature area of the Okuetsu region as well as creating and implementing solutions for these challenges.

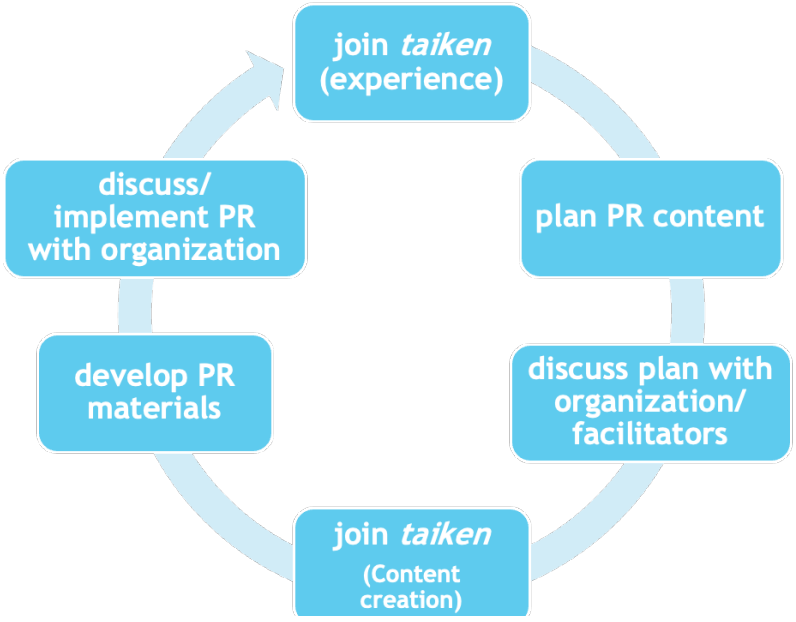
Artifact 4: Extract from the course syllabus

Both PBL courses took place over the course of an academic year. The first semester focuses on steps (1), (2), and (3) (as described above) and ends with a review and report of the progress. The second semester resumes step (3) and mostly revolves around steps (4) and (5). The courses are formally scheduled to meet every other week for 180 minutes; however, the meeting times can be adapted to the needs of the stakeholders to allow for fieldwork, appointments with external actors, and personal schedules. In these two iterations of the Deep Fukui project, the flexible scheduling often translated into sporadic class meetings, while most of what would be normally considered "class time" was adjusted by the learners to fit the needs of their research and promotion efforts. Another shared feature of the two courses was two presentations – an in-class interim activity report at the end of July and a final presentation of the project in a school-wide PBL event in late January. Despite the similarities highlighted so far, the learners put their unique twist to their PBL activities and led their projects in different directions as narrated below.

THE 2021-2022 ITERATION

Seven students joined our project-based course in 2021. In the first semester, fieldwork outings and direct community engagement were limited by COVID-19 restrictions. Therefore, the learners approached the partner organization via online meetings to learn more about their activities, challenges, and promotion campaigns. Upon learning that the organization has an Instagram and YouTube presence, the learners decided to leverage social media tools to expand the organization's reach in the local and global community among younger people through pictures and short videos of the *taiken* experiences offered. At this stage, the group split into two teams, in charge of Instagram PR and YouTube PR, respectively.

After that, the two teams learned more about how engagement in social media works by analyzing successful creators and reading about the topic. Once COVID-19 restrictions were removed, the two teams planned on traveling to Rokuroshi Highland to join the *taiken* events themselves and start a cycle of "experience-plan-implement" seen in Artifact 5.

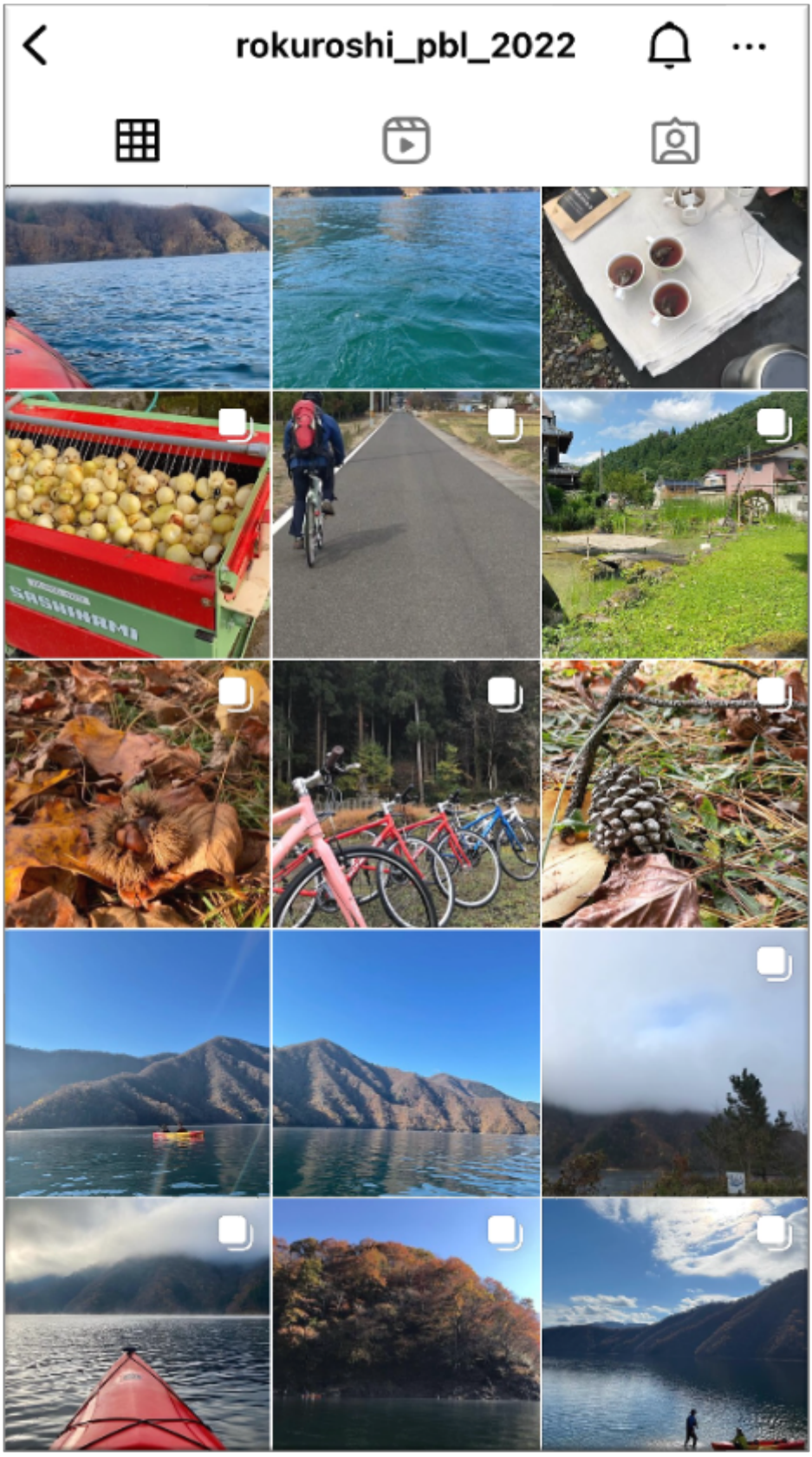


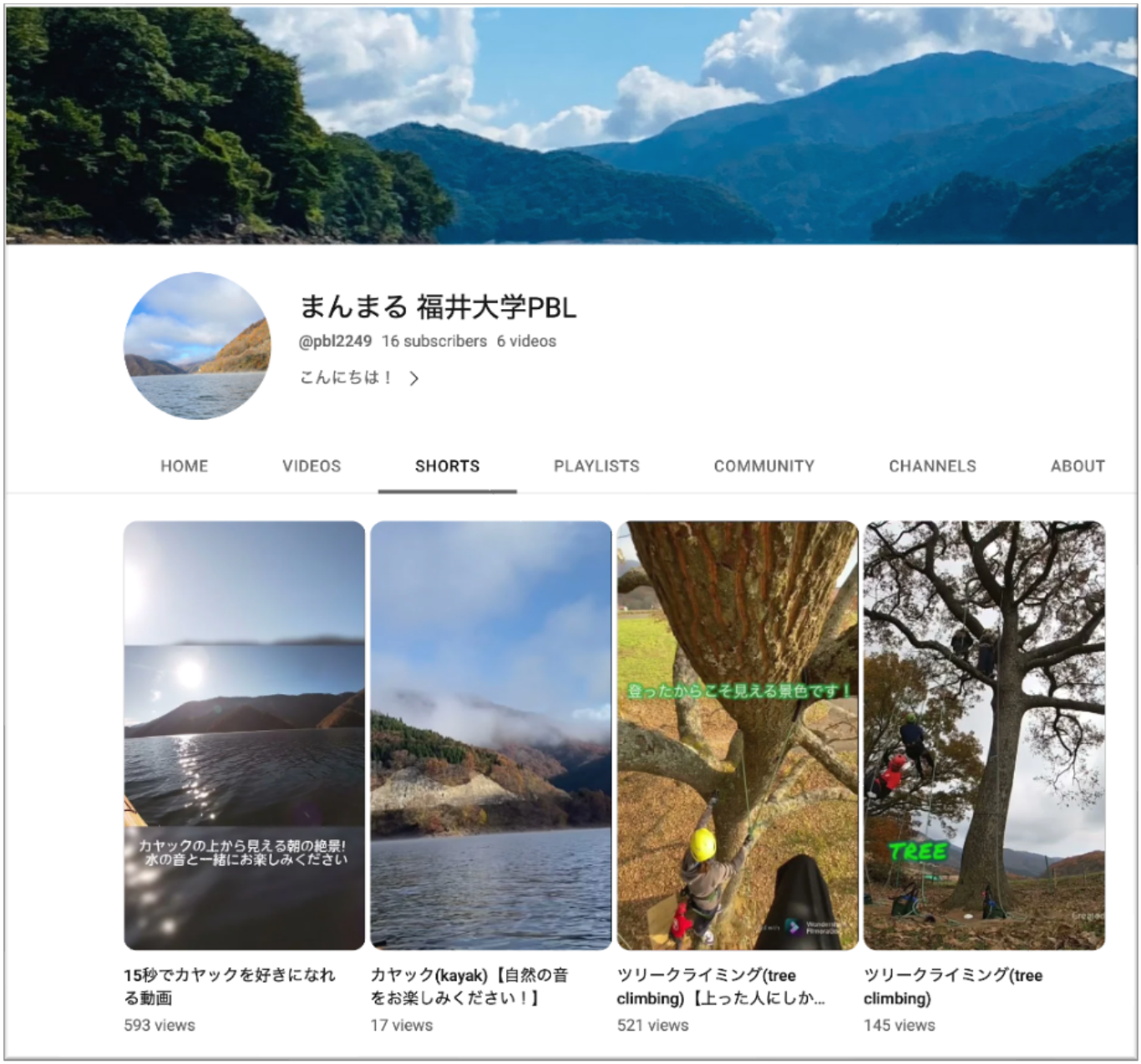
Artifact 5: The 2021-2022 PBL cycle

The two teams joined *taiken* experiences such as bike tours in Ono City, tree climbing, and kayaking on Lake Kuzuryu to acquaint themselves with the beauty of Rokuroshi Highland and fully understand the *taiken* experience. These were also occasions to learn more from the spokespeople of the cooperating organization. Then, informed by their first observations, the learners began planning the promotional efforts (e.g., identifying their audience and goals, deciding how much and which content to develop and how to calendarize their social media posts) in a proposal document (sample) submitted to the partner organization. The two teams submitted their proposals to us first, to which we gave feedback based on the idea's feasibility and appropriateness. After this, both groups joined a *taiken* experience again to take pictures and video footage for promotional materials.

Artifact 6: PR photos taken by the learners (bicycle tour and tree climbing)

From late November, the two teams continued their independent work to develop promotional materials – in this case, selecting/editing pictures and short videos to go on Instagram, and creating brief videos designed as YouTube Shorts. They also kept constant direct and spontaneous (meaning not facilitated by us) contact with the local organization to ensure that the materials were high quality and representative of the organization's communication style and goals.



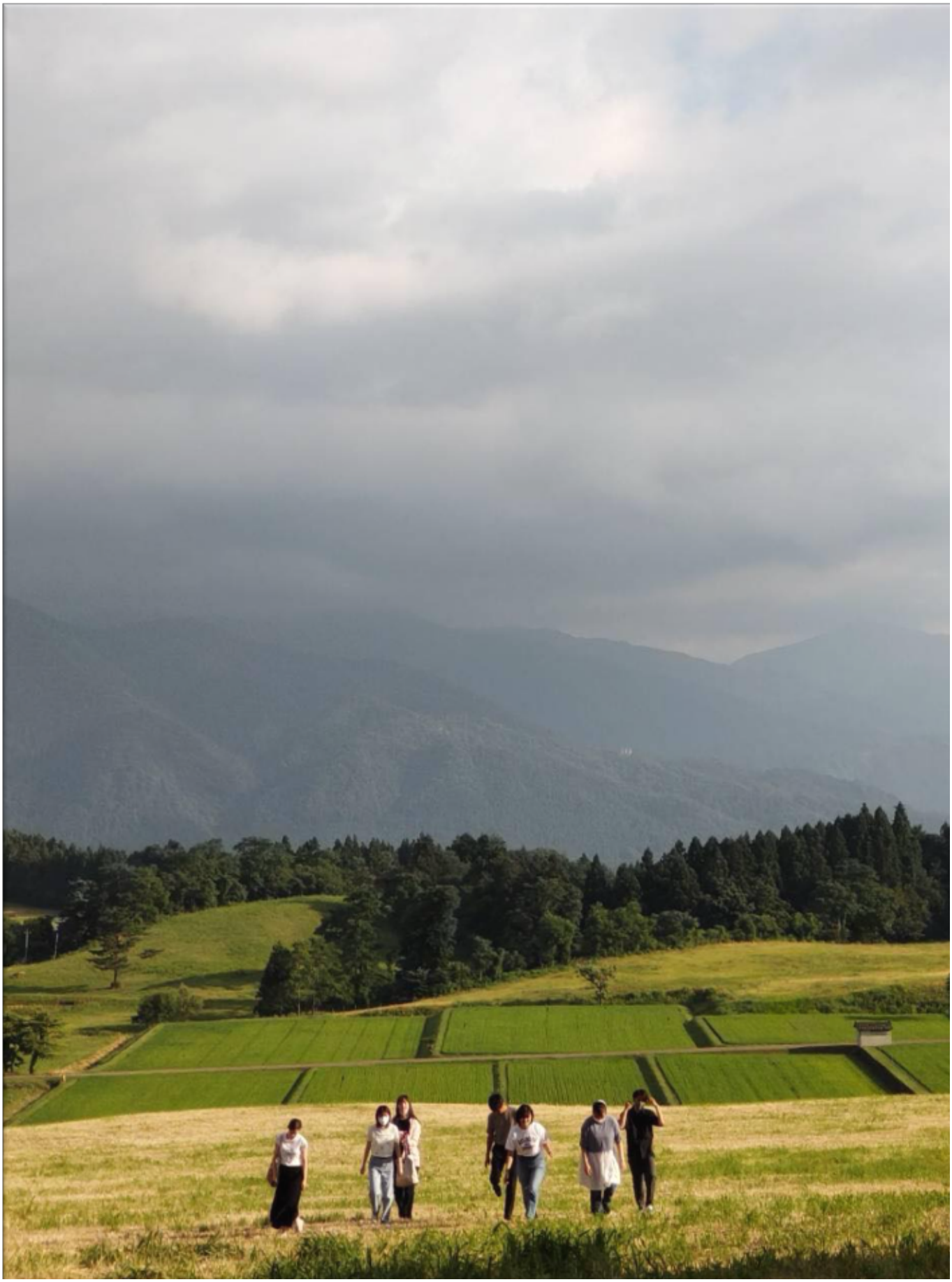


Artifact 7: Social media engagement (Instagram and YouTube teams)

At the end of the second semester, the two teams joined forces to prepare a 30-minute presentation reporting on their PBL activities and takeaways. The audience consisted of peers, other university instructors involved in PBL, and representatives of the organization – thus providing closure to a project that left, according to student reflections, all parties satisfied despite the challenges of remoteness of the area and difficulty in disseminating PR via Instagram and YouTube.

THE 2022-2023 ITERATION

At the beginning of the first semester, the new group of students – seven initially, which became five after two international students left to return home – met two student representatives of the previous iteration to learn about their activities and experiences in the PBL. The new group decided to continue the project theme from 2021-2022, but change directions by organizing in-person events and promoting other facilities in the Rokuroshi area targeting younger people.



Artifact 8: The 2022-2023 group in Rokuroshi

While the 2021-2022 PBL learner process could be described as an organic cycle, the activity of the 2022-2023 learners resembled a tide, surging with force, striking, and receding – a pattern that the group exhibited throughout the project.

After experiencing a day in the beauty of the natural surroundings of Rokuroshi Highland (Artifacts 8-9), interviewing the members of the collaborating organization, and brainstorming PR possibilities, they quickly decided on a plan to create a bilingual pamphlet collating the voices of actual visitors to the area. Following that, they settled on organizing an event at Rokuroshi Highland capitalizing on the local *taiken* activities in the forest (yoga, games, or movie screenings). Lastly, they chose to take over the social media accounts of the organization to showcase "live" takes of different activities in the area in all seasons. This was the first surge, decisions taken rapidly that soon transitioned into the implementation phase. The learners' drive and goal orientation was so quick and forceful that we believed the end goal of this project would be accomplished in a short time. However, the learners realized the over-ambitious nature of their first proposal and ended up scrapping most of these initial ideas.

Artifact 9: The learners making tea out of leaves found in the Rokuroshi Highland woods

Recovering from this first setback, the learners became interested in hosting a stargazing event and planned for their "*final ideal*": promoting Rokuroshi Highland as the destination for a romantic drive targeting young couples in a series of weekend stargazing events they labeled *hoshizora hammock*. However, this idea was scrapped as they could not receive permission from Ono City city hall. In their third surge, the learners visited Rokuroshi Highland again with the intention of finding suitable locations to host nature-themed events. From their reflections, we learned that they had the opportunity to secure the Rokuroshi Walking Center, but were concerned about the dilapidated state of some of the fixtures. Independently, they decided to inquire with the Fukui Nature Conservation Center to use the Rokuroshi Walking Center and install new benches that they could purchase through local crowdfunding. They were cleared to use the Walking Center, but not allowed to renovate the outside fixtures. Some progress was made, but yet once more some backtracking proved necessary.

As summer came and went, the group of learners needed to take definitive action if they wanted to hold some kind of bilingual/multilingual event. They did so by planning and advertising for two events to take place on a weekend in November (one on Saturday and one on Sunday). They made a promotion poster and disseminated it in various strategic high-traffic locations in the Okuetsu area, as well as our university, and also spread the word among their acquaintances. In addition, they also conducted PR using teasers on Instagram. The first day of the event was quite successful, and the group welcomed, among others, families with children, and accompanied them to the woods to gather leaves, acorns, and wood chippings to make nature-based craft art (Artifact 10).

Artifact 10: Day 1 of the event

The second event on Sunday was compromised in part by awful weather, but the learners still managed to invite a group of fellow university students, made gel candles together and joined in a cheese-making *taiken* experience (Artifact 11).

Artifact 11: Day 2 of the event

After the events and reflection time, the learners decided to resume the early idea of a bilingual pamphlet to ensure there was an international component to the PBL course. One of the facilitators managed to secure funding, and the students designed two four-page brochures (one in Japanese, one in English) that would feature (1) a collage of pictures taken over a year in Rokuroshi Highland, (2) access information, (3) a hand-drawn map of the area with (4) a brief introduction to activities/facilities in Rokuroshi Highland (see Artifact 12). All pamphlet information was coordinated with the relevant stakeholders.

After the pamphlet was in print in February, the learners began disseminating them to prominent tourist points inside and outside of Fukui Prefecture (Artifact 13 – circled). They decided which tourist points to place the pamphlets, obtained permission to display or distribute the pamphlets there, and sent or hand-delivered them.

TAKEAWAYS

In this section, we will talk about the various takeaways we had from conducting this project-based learning class. Specifically, we will explain our observations of how activities were planned and implemented throughout the course by both the facilitators and students, ultimately reflecting on the independence the learners gained through the course structure. Then, we will share the learners' voices by referring to qualitative research and analysis we conducted through questionnaires, and the metacognitive skills we believed the learners gained in both iterations of the courses based on this research data and our own observations.

Artifact 12: Hand-drawn map to recommended locations and activities in Rokuroshi Highland.

Artifact 13: Rokuroshi Highland promotional pamphlets on display.

TAKEAWAY #1: LEARNER INDEPENDENCE THROUGH CLASS ACTIVITY DEVELOPMENT

Over the multiple iterations of this project-based learning course, we have seen an interesting phenomenon in which learners have taken more control of the activities as the course progresses throughout the year. For example, in the 2022-2023 iteration of the course, we initially set up the foundational meetings with the head of the organization in the Rokuroshi Highland area in May and June. However, as the learners and the head of the organization became more acquainted, we started to be bypassed as the contacts, to the point that by July we were not notified of meetings. In fact, this independence by learners in organizing meetings eventually extended to other organizations (government entities) and even the "final product" (events). This shift in agency from us, the facilitators, to the students reflected increasing independence by the group of learners, which we cautiously welcomed. While we encouraged them to work directly with the association, we would have appreciated more updates on major milestones as the ultimate course administrators. A similar pattern also appeared in the 2021-2022 iteration of the course.

TAKEAWAY #2: COURSE FACILITATORS FOSTER METACOGNITIVE SKILLS, OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS FOSTER CONCRETE SKILLS

As we had already conducted various iterations of this community-based PBL course since 2017, we decided to start collecting qualitative data on the students' perceptions of the course in the 2021-2022 iteration. Specifically, we conducted a total of four questionnaires focusing on: (1) the goals the learners set and achieved, (2) the actual learning outcome they perceived for themselves, (3) their perceptions of the roles of the facilitators and the various representatives of organizations and what they learned from them, (4) learner descriptions of the various relationships they had throughout the course, and (5) concrete activities they found useful during the course.

We could discern a number of selective codes based on a socioconstructivist grounded theory model of analysis (Charmaz, 2014), allowing us to ascertain an interesting set of perceptions held by the students. The learners saw the relationship they had with representatives of organizations as one that fostered concrete skills development (data collection methods, knowledge of the local area, use of video equipment). In contrast, they saw the relationship they had with the facilitators, as one in which they gained metacognitive skills (time management, project management, problem solving).

Combining these voices, and adding our own observations over the two years of the courses as interpretative anchors, we have determined a set of metacognitive skills in which we believe the learners showed considerable development over the year: (1) task orientation, (2) planning, (3) active listening, (4) self-evaluation, (5) self-correction, and (6) independence.

The first skill is *task-orientation*. This entails learners understanding elements of PBL "philosophy" as defined by Tyagi and Kannan (2013): a need to know, a driving question, student voice and choice, 21st-century skills (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and use of technology), inquiry and innovation, feedback and revision, and a publicly presented product. In speaking with the organization, learners understood the needs of the organization, posited their own ideas and received feedback on those ideas, ultimately creating different "products" for public consumption (SNS pages, events, pamphlets).

In implementing this PBL philosophy, learners developed the second skill, *planning*. As mentioned above, they quickly took control of their own learning by organizing meetings with the outside organizations on their own. Their increased ability for *planning* also extends to the high degree of coordination needed to plan events and pamphlet/SNS layouts.

The learners also developed the third skill, *active listening*. This skill was particularly useful for understanding and interpreting the needs that the outside organizations had in order to ideate and implement action in order to help resolve those needs. They identified through initial interviews in the area that there was a severe lack of public transportation to the area. Furthermore, as they

developed their respective products, this skill was useful in adjusting the direction of the product as they received feedback from us or the outside organization.

The fourth skill, *self-evaluation*, was necessary for the learners to recognize when things were going in the right direction. This was fostered through weekly project journals that they filled in reflecting and assessing the week's activities, constantly refining the project through their individual judgment. For example, early on in the 2022-2023 iteration, the learners went back and forth on what their final product would be due to considerations such as project originality, concerns about fundraising and the length of time necessary, and events in January being snowed out. Eventually, they conducted the events, which they settled on after reflecting on the feasibility of their original plans.

The above two skills dovetail with the fifth skill, *self-correction*. The learners needed their *active listening* skills and *self-evaluation* skills in order to correct the trajectory of the project based on both their own evaluations and the evaluations of us and the outside organizations. For example, when the students realized the local government would not cooperate in creating more public transportation opportunities, they "corrected" course by planning a drive-and-stargaze event in the area (This was not implemented due to another similar event already being conducted in the area).

The final gain (and perhaps most important), is *independence*. Independence was far from an innate characteristic of either group of learners. However, in both iterations, we saw a slow build-up of confidence and development of independent decision-making over time, especially as the learners started leaving the classroom after the initial scaffolding and immersed themselves in the community through fieldwork. Already mentioned above, but by halfway through the course learners had already bypassed us as the contact points for organizations, and conducted almost all correspondence directly with multiple private and government organizations to develop their events or SNS content. By the end of the course, we could appreciate a degree of independent thought and action that neither needed nor relied excessively on facilitator guidance.

CURRENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

After tweaking our approach multiple times, we came to believe that the got-nothing model is more functional to fostering metacognitive skills and independent origination, as exemplified in the 2022-2023 PBL outcomes. The 2023-2024 iteration of the Deep Fukui project is unsurprisingly based on this model. In this project, learners work with an organization in Katsuyama City that professionally engages in many activities to promote the local area (events, shop management, social media promotion). The learners have only been introduced to the new partner organization and the dozens of activities it is engaged in, so they truly have free choice to mimic the production of one of these projects or introduce a brand-new activity in which they will work with this organization.

The biggest challenge faced by the students in the 2021-2023 iterations of the PBL course was the travel time (for interviews and event coordination). For the 2023-2024 Deep Fukui project, in working with this organization in Katsuyama City, they are in an area that is relatively close to the university compared to Rokuroshi Highland, meaning shorter travel time which will hopefully translate into a more productive use of the time in project development.

As the project development area has changed, we cannot continue on the same exact research path following our learners' revitalization activities in the Rokuroshi Highland area. However, we can continue to explore the more abstract ideas we have presented. Specifically, we hope to develop the idea that the roles of facilitator and outside organization representatives were differentiated and crystallized throughout the implementation of the course. We are interested in understanding further the observation that the facilitators focus on metacognitive skills, providing the scaffolding needed for learners to avoid feeling like they are left on their own without the proper tools, while the content experts focus on concrete professional skills that the learners need in order to bring their vision and

the vision of the cooperating organization together and coordinate the efforts that will lead to the final project.

Furthermore, we have used our own observations to identify the metacognitive skills developed by students in a community revitalization project-based learning course: (1) task orientation, (2) planning, (3) active listening, (4) self-evaluation, and (5) self-correction. Another realization we had was the striking increase of (6) independent action in our students when given the opportunity and tools. After graduating, many GCS students end up working in local government or for organizations that contribute to the community, so by developing these skills in working directly with governments and community-centered organizations, they are actively developing the skills they can use from Day 1 in their future careers. We hope to refine our interpretations through observation and qualitative research conducted in the current iteration of the class. As a further research path, we plan on monitoring the English language use and development of the learners. Ultimately, in line with the conference feedback and our own subsequent reflections, we hope to develop and share easy-to-implement guidelines for PBL-in-English course design based on our successes and failures.

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SDGs: Community Learning in Okayama and the Setouchi Region

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on a course called 'Community learning in Okayama and the Setouchi region' that took place from April to July in 2023 at Okayama University with students from Laos, Taiwan and Thailand. In the first half of the course, weekly teacher- and student-chosen readings about SDGs were discussed online in English. In the second half, the class visited three organizations in the Okayama area that foreground the promotion of SDG related activities in their business models: a garbage recycling company, a fur and leather company, and a bamboo furniture company. After each discussion lesson and each site visit students submitted a one-page reflection on what they had learned and submitted a 1,000-word report describing a problem connected to their home countries. This paper will briefly describe the course, discuss its successes and challenges, and make suggestions for the future, including ones made by participants at LD30.

Keywords: SDGs, community learning, authentic learning

I work at Okayama University in the western half of Japan. It's a large national university with 12 faculties and several different centres. I belong to one of these centres called the Institute for Promotion of Education and Campus Life. The University has always attracted international students, especially to the agriculture and science faculties, and in recent years has really tried to focus on linking courses with the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One example of this is an annual publication of all teacher and student projects that attempt to address one or more of the SDGs. In 2023 there were over 200 projects uploaded to the university website.

During COVID-19 I was involved in the creation of a new SDGs master's course which aimed to attract international students, particularly from emerging countries in Southeast Asia. The language of the course was English to decrease the barrier of students having to learn Japanese. The course I was to jointly teach with my colleague, Professor Miyuki Yoshikawa, was aimed at introducing students to organizations in the Okayama area that were particularly focused in their business models on achieving SDGs.

Professor Yoshikawa has a wide network of contacts in the Okayama area, and she worked extremely hard to encourage these businesses to allow us to visit them. In 2021, despite the influence of COVID-19, she continued to have face-to-face meetings with prospective partners. When she met up with various organizations, she would open up Zoom on her phone which allowed me to join in the conversations. These organizations included all kinds of businesses such as organic farmers and cafes that employed people with learning difficulties. It was a pleasure to

be able to interact with such good natured and open-hearted people who were just the kind of people you would like international students to meet.

However, when the program started in April 2022 no students signed up, probably because of the restrictions on travel and study that were caused by COVID-19. As a result, we had to delay the project for a year and Professor Yoshikawa had to apologize to the organizations that had agreed to collaborate with us. Luckily, in April 2023, three students from Taiwan, Thailand and Laos were able to join us and we could start the course. The rest of this paper will describe this example of authentic situated learning and discuss its successes and challenges, including reflections made possible by participating in LD30.

THE COURSE

READING AND DISCUSSION

Okayama University's academic year is divided into four terms of eight weeks each. In the first lesson of the first term in April 2023, Professor Yoshikawa and I met the three students face to face. Som, Nid and Ruby were all women in their 20s who clearly had a passion for social justice and an acute awareness of inequality, and so I was confident that they would make it an extremely stimulating course. After the initial introductory lesson, we then met online once a week for the next seven weeks. At that time this was the most convenient way for us to meet. The aim of these lessons was to become familiar with the SDGs that were pertinent to the businesses that we would visit later in Term 2.

Each lesson had a similar pattern. I would choose some readings or videos connected to the SDG in focus and the students would share their own links to materials that they thought were relevant. We would then discuss these different sources together. As well as choosing materials and facilitating discussion, I also tried to draw attention to critical issues related to the SDGs. As it turned out I did not need to do that very much as the students were so independently minded and critically aware anyway. After the lessons the students wrote reflections on what they had learned, and I gave comments back. The comments were a combination of feedback on their writing (mechanics, style and so on) and comments on their ideas and content.

Here is an extract from Ruby's reflection after a lesson on poverty. This exemplifies the thoughtful insights and critical awareness that Ruby revealed throughout the course.

> *Not only children in the poorer countries but also children in the rich and developed countries, are still facing the situation of hunger and poverty. Though some people might question if we really can increase children's learning motivation by offering free school lunches. At least we can make children come to school and sit in the classroom, not just skip school and choose to go to work or do something else. People say that education is the way to help developing countries build a better future, and I agree with it. We should let children have a high-quality education and avoid hunger-and malnutrition and have a chance to change their own country's future. I think it's one of the meanings of SDGs too, to make a better world for everyone.*

SITE VISITS

In Term 2, we went on three visits to businesses that Professor Yoshikawa had arranged for us to meet. One challenge of this kind of community learning is that it is quite hard for students (and teachers) to opt out of their other lessons in order to make time for a day trip. As you might imagine the students had to write letters to other teachers asking for permission to miss a lesson or have an alternative exam. A second challenge is transport. The venues were a long way from the university with little direct public transport, so we needed to go by car. Fortunately, there is a system where teachers can borrow a university car which is what we did: two teachers and three students. It was a lot of fun!

The first visit was to the Hirabayashi Kinzoku recycling company. This is a large company that has branches all over Okayama. We went to three different types of recycling business: an electrical appliance recycling facility, a community waste facility, and a scrap metal yard. At each place company workers explained in great detail how their facility worked, what its contribution to SDGs was, and then gave us a guided tour. The students were eager to make notes and ask questions of the staff, with Professor Yoshikawa acting as translator if necessary.

In Japan most people are used to sorting their garbage into different types, but Hirabayashi Kinzoku took this principle to extraordinary levels by attempting to recycle up to 95% of the materials they received. The most impressive example of this was at the scrap metal yard where tiny pieces of metal fragments were collected and stored in huge sacks ready to be sent to a smelting factory.

Here is an extract from Nid's reflection after this visit.

> *The waste management laws and trash recycling are two of many things I like about Japan, together with the strong sense of social awareness. In Laos, due to the absence of a specific regulatory framework or explicitly defined responsibilities for waste management, much of this waste is improperly disposed of... Although a lot of garbage cans are provided, many people tend to take them for granted. Especially after events like festivals, plenty of trash is littered on the ground. It can be said that, with the relative lack of public responsibility and the reckless consequences of current practice, Laos needs to put in more effort and raise public awareness about waste management to achieve environmental sustainability.*

This quotation is one example of how students tried hard to connect what they had learned in Japan with their own country. In this instance Laos is compared unfavorably with Japan, but this was not always the case, as the students showed how Japan could also benefit from knowledge from their countries too.

The subsequent two visits took on a similar pattern of explanation, question and answer, and a tour. In contrast to the large recycling company, the Talabo leather goods company is a family-run home business utilizing skins from boars and deer. The skins are dried in the garden and then dyed and turned into various leather products. The increasing numbers of wild animals such as deer and boar that look for food in populated areas are becoming a problem in some parts of Japan, and part of that issue is to dispose responsibly of any carcasses that have been culled to limit numbers. In response, the Talabo company tries to turn waste leather into usable products and be part of a cycle of sustainability between humans and animals.

The final site visit was to the Teori furniture company in the Mabi area of Okayama. Teori's raw material is bamboo from local forests. Although bamboo can be a terrific resource as a construction material, it grows quickly and can soon take over hillsides and become unmanageable. Teori is trying to promote sustainable uses of bamboo so that it benefits the local area, rather than it being seen as a negative weed that has to be controlled or even eradicated. On our visit to Mabi, we toured three of the company's facilities: the factory where the bamboo is processed into a wood that can be used to make furniture; a second factory where the furniture is made; and finally, the showroom where there are gorgeous examples of the high-quality products that Teori produces.

Here is an extract from Som's reflection after this visit which illustrates the advantage of embedding learning in the community.

> *This site visit was the first time for me to visit a factory. My major is linguistics, so I have never had the opportunity to visit a factory, and I thought that visiting a factory in Japan would be a rare occurrence. However, this class was not only a study of descriptive SDGs, but also a kind of practical training, where I could go to actual places and have*

concrete experiences, not only from a textbook. Also, this field trip was a chance to see a business that was designed for the community, and I hope to put my professional knowledge to use in combination with it in the future.

The final part of the course was for the students to write a short academic report which aimed to link what they had learned so far about SDGs with issues in their home countries. They produced excellent work focusing on the impacts of an increase in consumption on economics and the environment; the #Metoo movement in Taiwan; and the importance of waste separation in Thailand. All were extremely well written with many thoughtful and practical ideas about how to increase ethical and sustainable practices.

REFLECTION ON THE COURSE

Having described the course content I would now like to reflect on three areas: positive aspects; challenges; and some further thoughts that participating in LD30 prompted.

POSITIVES

I have not had many opportunities within a university context to combine in-class learning with community visits; so, on a very personal level it was extremely motivating to be part of this new course. I could be a co-learner with the students which helped develop a closer relationship with them and also allowed me to find out many new things about the area I am working in. It also seemed motivating for the students who were enthusiastic in sharing their reflections and learning about SDGs and thoroughly involved in meeting the Okayama organizations. The organizations themselves expressed that being able to meet students from other countries was very stimulating and that they hoped to create more of these opportunities in the future, and that linking with a local university was a beneficial thing to do.

CHALLENGES

Creating a new course from scratch usually involves a lot of thought and research into materials and themes. This course however involved the additional challenge of finding community-based organizations to collaborate with. Even though Professor Yoshikawa has a great network of community links, it was not easy for her to set up mutually convenient times to meet. It took a lot of groundwork for her to arrange these visits. For other teachers thinking of doing this kind of course I would not underestimate how much effort and time this kind of networking takes. In addition, Professor Yoshikawa had the unenviable task of having to let companies know that our first iteration would have to be canceled. A second challenge, as mentioned above, is good access to transport. We were able to use a university car, but if the numbers of students had been higher this would not have been possible. There is a need in organizing this kind of course to be flexible in various ways such as teaching face to face and online and having different lesson times rather than adhering to just one mode.

LD30 REFLECTION

Taking part in the LD30 conference gave me several opportunities to reflect on the course and think about it in a different way. Firstly, presenting about the course was a chance to describe formally what happened and to think about what it meant. I think that normally I would have ended the course and not thought too much about it until the next time it came around. Similarly, writing this paper has allowed me to write in a different manner to a research article, and to highlight what the students and Okayama organizations did in terms of authentic situated learning.

At LD30 I had several conversations with other participants about the course, and one key idea formed from those. That is, I had not realized how important it is for teachers to help the students to stay in touch with the businesses that they had visited, and to follow up in the future as to whether the students have managed to include their learning in any actions. If this were done, it could truly make the project a collaborative and mutually beneficial one.

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Educational Development in Rural Cambodia

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I describe an ongoing project for economic and educational development on Koh Trong Island in rural Cambodia. Despite challenges in education and economic growth, the project seeks to create economic opportunities and reduce youth migration to urban areas by empowering local youth with essential business skills and English language proficiency by utilizing a local agriculture product, pomelo, as a driver for economic opportunity. Collaboration with stakeholders from Cambodia and Japan identified challenges in agriculture and business skills. Moreover, the paper highlights the pivotal role of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in tailoring language education to meet the specific needs of the community, enhancing engagement and relevance. The paper concludes with actionable steps, stressing the importance of funding for sustainability. Despite the existing challenges, I am optimistic about the project's potential to support long-term economic growth and community empowerment by addressing language barriers as a fundamental step towards achieving these goals.

Keywords: project-based learning (PBL), educational development, curriculum, Cambodia

In this paper, I discuss experiences and challenges in the initial stage of an ongoing economic and educational development initiative in rural Cambodia. Cambodia has faced many issues related to education, particularly a lack of educators in general in the country. With the lack of a populous educated class, the low salaries for public educators, and the general lack of government funding (IMF, 2023), Cambodia faces many challenges in developing economic and educational opportunities for its citizens, particularly in rural areas. As an English language educator, I am keenly aware of how a lack of communicative ability in English can create a barrier to full participation in the rapidly globalized and interconnected world. Globalization and technology are also impacting developing nations and their residents as the gap in access to technology and information increases between urban and rural settings.

As an individual, I wanted to make a contribution. I believe that by supporting English language education at the grassroots or community level, I can assist people in gaining access to other resources and thereby help empower them.

OBJECTIVES

This initial stage was conducted upon the suggestion of the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, who introduced the Island of Sangkat Koh Trong, hereafter Koh Trong Island, as an area in strong need of economic and educational development. As such, this study focused on identifying the challenges facing residents and potential areas where sustainable economic development could be enhanced by a training program targeting the youth of the island.

However, for many, access to free learning and business resources, such as online courses, YouTube tutorials, business software, and smart phones apps, a lack of English language proficiency is a barrier. Furthermore, for the islanders, access to an important potential customer base, the expatriate community, also requires English language communication skills. However, the islanders have specific goals, which lend themselves very well to Project-Based Learning (PBL). PBL focuses on specific outcomes, such as building a website, or creating promotional materials, or developing a customer base, and calls upon educators to provide scaffolding or learning support necessary to achieve the project goals.

BACKGROUND

Koh Trong Island lies in the Mekong River in the rural province of Kratie. It is 223 hectares in size with fertile land for agriculture. It is well-known in Cambodia for its unique agricultural product, a local pomelo fruit. Koh Trong Island consists of two villages, Kbal Koh and Chong Koh, with a population of 1,887 and 388 households (University of Kratie, 2021). However, it suffers from a youth drain, the youth migration to urban areas, with many young people moving to Phnom Penh or the Cambodian-Thai border for work upon completion of high school because of the lack of economic opportunities on the island. Development of the economic potential of the local pomelo fruit may be one way to stem the youth drain by providing economic opportunities on Koh Trong Island.

THE POMELO, *CITRUS MAXIMA*

The pomelo, *Citrus maxima,* is a citrus fruit native to Southeast Asia, with its origins believed to be in Malaysia and Indonesia. The pomelo is widely cultivated in tropical and subtropical areas, and is recognized for being the largest citrus fruit, comparable to a small melon in size. The pomelo has a thick, easily peelable green or yellow rind with a milder and sweeter flavor profile compared to grapefruits, with light floral undertones. The texture resembles a grapefruit with easily separable segments. Nutritionally, pomelos are a valuable source of vitamin C, antioxidants, dietary fiber, potassium, and other essential nutrients. The pomelo is consumed fresh (Morton, 1987).

POMELO FROM THE KOH TRONG ISLAND

The pomelo from Koh Trong Island enjoys a reputation for excellent taste. However, currently agricultural practices vary according to the farmer, so quality varies from farm to farm and from fruit to fruit. Most of the fruit are sold by local farmers in the town of Kratie which is accessible by ferry. Some farmers use Facebook to sell fruit to residents in the capital city of Phnom Penh, however the profit from sales to Phnom Penh are similar to that of local sales with shipping and returns eating into the profit margins.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION AS THE GATEWAY TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

English language education can act as a gateway for economic development. As outlined below, this project took a needs based approach with the goal of developing the basis of capacity for community centered economic development. Because Koh Trong Island does not have a strong economic foundation, the lack of ongoing funding for education and economic development is a key issue at the community level. Therefore, obtaining ongoing free or low-cost access to educational materials, business materials, and smart applications is critical to continued development and, because there are no local language (i.e. Khmer language) versions of most of these important tools, development of a PBL language program to allow access to these tools is crucial. So it is with this background in mind that I began our fact finding mission.

STAKEHOLDERS

This ongoing collaborative effort to promote sustainable development and education, engages various stakeholders in Cambodia and Japan to play integral roles in a shared initiative. Local farmers and youth from Koh Trong Island will actively contribute by bringing on-the-ground perspectives to the project. The University of Kratie, with its administration and educators, supports the initiative through knowledge dissemination and educational outreach. The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) in Cambodia, led by Touch Visalsok, Ph.D., the Secretary of State, serves as a key coordinating entity, aligning educational goals with broader developmental strategies. Meanwhile, Japan's involvement includes the research team at Kagawa University's Faculty of Agriculture and International Office. The Kagawa University team consists of two social scientists with experience and expertise in language, business and entrepreneurship training, and two agriculture scientists specialized in soil and soil nutrition. Additionally, financial backing from the Takahashi Industrial Foundation provided crucial resources for the first stage of this initiative.

FACT FINDING

After initial discussions with MoEYS, discussions were held with the Rector and administrative team of the University of Kratie, followed by discussions with faculty in language education and agriculture. This was followed by visits to Koh Trong Island. At this time, agricultural practices were observed at three farms. Interviews were held with two growers: one was a very successful grower who not only sold pomelo fruit but also sold pomelo cuttings; and the other was fairly unsuccessful selling fruit to the local market stalls, regularly having to give refunds to the stall sellers.

An analysis of the data collected by the University of Kratie on socio-economic aspects: 1) general demographics, 2) job status, family's income, and expenses, 3) education status, 4) vulnerability and the 5) environmental conditions was conducted. Furthermore, an in-depth focused interview was held with the daughter of a local farmer who began using their underutilized resource of pomelo to fund her university education at the University of Kratie. Following this, discussions were held with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Cambodia Office and the JICA Shikoku Center to get on site feedback and a better understanding of the funding process through JICA, respectively.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

While English language education represents a starting point for this project, an important mission of this project is to encourage sustainable development. As such this project addresses the following SDG's:

1. No Poverty
4. Quality eEucation
5. Gender Equality
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
15. Life on Land
17. Partnership for the Goals

NEEDS AND CAPACITY BUILDING REQUIREMENTS

Our initial investigation conducted with the University of Kratie identified the following "needs" and areas for capacity building requirements:

Agricultural techniques

- Vegetable growing techniques and crops
- Pesticides usage
- Controlling crop pests
- Pomelo growing techniques and care
- Processing of Pomelo peel and other harvest waste
- Quality control

Business skills

- Business planning
- Costing (analysis and pricing)
- Using computers as business tools
- Marketing & Social Media
- Customer service

English language proficiencies

Table 1: Desired outcome/targets and target skills

Outcome/targets	Skills
Attracting international customers in Phnom Penh	Using SNS to advertise in English, responding to customer requests, negotiating pricing, deliveries and addressing quality problems
Specific English language skills for computer usage	Developing English language ability and skills to use open source software, because few localized versions (i.e. Khmer) of software are available (esp. freeware)
Marketing	Describing processes, production, quality control, and food safety in English to target customers
Education and AI	Developing the vocabulary and communication tools with AI to utilize AI for self-directed learning in English
Pomelo growing techniques and care	Developing basic communication and agriculture related vocabulary to access available experts that speak only English/Japanese
Meeting the expressed need at community level for English language support	Encouraging the widespread belief that English language skills will enhance economic opportunities by focusing on language (as described above) that will help empower the community to reach their goals

English language teaching must address the basic language needs of the community (see Table 1). Progression in these target areas requires a certain functional level of English language proficiency, so the development of a project-based learning program is needed. PBL seeks specific outcomes and encourages learners to achieve specific goals, such as developing a webpage, creating marketing materials, etc., in the target language (i.e. English), by providing scaffolding to support a self-directed learning process. The desired outcomes can be in fact considered several projects and therefore PBL lends itself well to help the learners achieve their real life goals in English.

ACTIONABLE ITEMS

Based upon the fact-finding mission, we determined to address the above needs and capacity building requirements by developing a training program that also includes language learning.

Table 2: Future steps for program development from 2024 onward

Training target	Specific targets
i. Agriculture training	• Soil analysis and management • Organic production • Pomelo growing techniques and care • Processing of Pomelo peel and other harvest waste • Quality control
ii. Breed registration	• Identification of the Pomelo from Koh Trong Island • NOTE: will require the cooperation of the University of Kratie with genetic testing to be conducted in Japan, and finally registration as a new species if gene testing merits. However, this will be a low priority in the second stage because of the costs.
iii. Business skills	• Intensive content-based training (entrepreneurship, utilizing social media, accounting, etc.) using F2F learning and Video on Demand

iv. English language proficiencies	• Development of the English language curriculum for the university
	  • e.g. Currently, the university does not have a PBL English language program, which they have recognized as an important goal for their curriculum. However, a lack of funding and training of teachers have prevented them from developing an in-house program. I will provide training on how to develop a program that addresses their needs.
	  • The International Scientific Communication Program of the Faculty of Agriculture of Kagawa University will be used as a model.

Because of the breadth and complexity of the training and the ongoing running costs of training, the next steps will call upon existing expertise at Kagawa University and the University of Kratie (see Table 2). To increase the expertise, faculty members from the University of Kratie for training. To date, one faculty member has already received training funded by the JST Sakura Science Exchange Program. Furthermore, guest lectures and visits from Kagawa University have commenced and will continue in the future. We will post Japanese graduate students in agriculture to teach basic agriculture and science in English and do collaborative research with the University of Kratie faculty (pending funding). The research components will require the acquisition of funding to provide non-destructive sweetness testing equipment and the establishment of a baseline by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) analysis to determine the profile of the “ideal pomelo”. This will allow comparative studies to ensure quality control and can lay the basis for selective breeding of future crop generations.

These initiatives will be supported through the development of online materials, such as templates for sales and promotional materials as well as video on demand training (VOD). These will be jointly developed by Kagawa University and the University of Kratie.

LEARNER DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

English language education plays an important role in this project (as detailed above), since English language proficiency will give the young people of Ko Trong Island access to more educational tools, software and a more affluent customer base. I believe that an important part of developing specific language training for this project was to understand more about the English language education in the area, specifically the challenges faced by learners and teachers. To gain a better understanding of the situation in Kratie, discussions were held and classes observed at a local rural high school in the Province of Kratie and at the University of Kratie.

Local High School: The high school headmaster requested that I not name the school because he had given permission for the visit without checking with the school board. Two classes were observed, a second year and a third year class. The primary teaching methodology observed was grammar translation. All teaching was conducted in Khmer. The only English language output was from students reading aloud as a class from the textbook. After class, I spoke with students from the second-year class who were the most advanced students in the school and were hoping to go to Royal Phnom Penh University, the premier university in Cambodia. They could express themselves in English, but according to them, their communicative ability was due to private tutoring in English on Skype. They reported that their classes at school were not engaging and the level of the class was too low for them. They welcomed a chance to interact with a native speaker of English. While I do not think that being a native speaker of English is related to teaching ability, the students placed great value on the time that they spent with me. They also said that they were so impressed that any university professor, let alone one from overseas, would come to their rural school.

The headmaster expressed pride in how much the school was able to do for the students with such limited resources. He also said it was very challenging because the teacher turnover rate was very high, and the typical student faced many obstacles in getting an education. Some students walked as much as 10 km to get to school. Rains regularly flooded the roads making them impassable on foot. Many students had to help with farming before and after school and, and in harvest season, many were unable to attend. He said that except for a few students in the advanced class, most of the students would not go on to university. The biggest challenge he faced as headmaster was getting the students to come and stay in school and he focused on community work involving the parents to extoll the value of education and gain the parents support for their children to come to school.

University of Kratie: A second-year communicative English class was observed. There were 12 students. Although the teacher had an up-to-date knowledge of teaching methodologies and had experience conducting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), she was required to use the selected textbook which relied heavily on grammar exercises, model conversations and scripted pair work. The students were quite shy while being observed. Consequently, the teacher asked me if I would like to teach. I conducted an introductory activity that encouraged the students to ask questions and be active listeners. After teaching questions and practicing interjecting into a conversation, I told a story with a humorous twist ending. Because the students had interjected to ask for clarification and repetition, they were able to understand the story and the joke of the twist ending. The laughter and enjoyment of the story was the reward. The laugh at the end demonstrated to them that by actively listening, interjecting and questioning, they could understand a complex story and “get the joke”. This ice breaker helped them relax and led to a 10-minute question and answer session about my home country, Canada. Other than their teacher, they had never met a non-Cambodian. They seemed to be quite pleased that they could use English to satisfy their curiosity about me.

After the class, I met with the teacher and head of the language program. They said that their most pressing need was for modern teaching materials. The university and the students could not afford to buy textbooks. Although the many English language education publishers turn a

blind eye to photocopying by schools in Cambodia, the university is not able to permit copying of copyright materials. The teacher explained that since it was necessary for the program to submit the education materials to the university and to MoEYS for clearance, she had to use the outdated materials that were available as the core teaching materials.

In consideration of this, the program head and I considered how we could address the specific needs for the development initiative. The current educational approach was not successful in meeting the communicative needs of conducting business in English. Therefore, we concluded that we needed to use an outcome based approach. Because this project has very specific outputs targeted, Project Based Learning (PBL) will be a key part of the language education for this initiative. There are significant challenges in taking a new approach with PBL. Cambodian students and educators have not been widely exposed to PBL (Lutes & Nhean, 2022), education in Cambodia is still very much teacher centered (Em et al., 2022), and PBL will ask the students to adapt to a new way of learning. However, the specificity of the needs and the focus of the learners lends itself well to PBL. Researchers have recognized and emphasized the importance of relevance as a fundamental motivator, and as a positive influence on motivation in classroom learning (Alessi and Trollip, 2001; Keller and Suzuki, 2004, Dornyei and Ushioda, 2011; Boo et al., 2015). The learners are interested in learning English for developing their businesses and want to focus specifically on skills that will directly improve their ability to access the expatriate community in Phnom Penh. As such, a consensus was reached that PBL was the most suitable approach.

As noted above, successfully exposing and acclimatizing the students to this new approach to learning will be an important factor in the success of this project. Language learner development will necessitate independent and self-directed learning, and will require support and scaffolding from the language teachers at the University of Kratie.

CONCLUSIONS AND THE NEXT STAGE

Koh Trong Island has unique agricultural advantages, such as rich soil, adequate rainfall, sufficient sunlight and a high quality parent fruit pool, for the cultivation of pomelo. To enhance its economic significance, formally establishing and registering this unique plant as a novel breed is an important long-term goal. This process will involve comprehensive analysis of the farming conditions, encompassing considerations such as soil and water quality. Providing support with advanced growing techniques is crucial, along with establishing standards for cultivation and evaluation of food quality. The ultimate goal is to create a distinct brand, leveraging the existing farmer cooperative. By engaging the local youth in better business planning and practices, there is real potential for both economic growth and community empowerment in the region. However, we are keenly aware of the barriers that exist for this community because of a lack of English language proficiency. Furthermore, it is important to understand that initially the English language goals of the learners may be only to gain access to the market, or to deal with foreign customers. It is these targeted goals that PBL will be utilized to address.

To realize these ambitious goals, there must be a focus in the next stage on obtaining funding. Currently, funding applications are being planned through JICA, JST, JSPS and international foundations. The following steps will depend on the type of funding obtained and the duration of the funding. However, I remain optimistic that this project will continue.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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Cooperation to Raise Learner Awareness & Encourage Community Participation

ABSTRACT

My interest in incorporating citizen science (CS) into one of my content-based English courses arose from a desire to link classroom activity with "real-world" situations and/or activities. The impetus was less a language learning goal than an inspiration to utilize a platform for bringing my second year junior college students' attention to pressing environmental issues, primarily the climate crisis, to foster both broader awareness of the issues, as well as their agency in addressing them.

Attending the LD30 Conference persuaded me that the language learning aspect can also potentially be strengthened through incorporation of techniques such as PBL (project-based learning). Based on what I learned from the PBL experiences of colleagues at the conference, I have suggested an enhanced approach to exposing students to CS that also facilitates language learning. The paper ends with some suggestions for projects that could be used with non-science majors.

Keywords: content-based instruction, citizen science (CS), project-based learning, real life research project

For over ten years, I have been teaching a content-based second-year geography course in English (L2) to my junior college English department students. It provides a useful platform for introducing topics such as the climate crisis, sustainability and sustainable development. However, the scope and depth to which the issues can be addressed is limited by time, and instruction in L2.

One avenue I am currently exploring is to encourage learners to participate in locally available "citizen science" (CS) activities. For the most part, these would not be conducted using the learners' second language, but their introduction and discussion in the classroom can potentially lead to independent learner involvement outside the classroom. I can reasonably anticipate positive effects on both their lives and their local community.

In his presentation at LD30, Robert Moreau introduced project-based learning (PBL) as being based on the pedagogical principle of "learning by doing" (Moreau, 2023), which resonated with me as my goal of raising awareness is one best reached by having learners directly engage with activities that can assist them in better grasping the implications of the concepts they are exposed to in the course. Although their engagement is not necessarily related to language learning, I think it is important from the point of view of cultivating a deeper understanding and appreciation of environmental issues.

Hokusei Gakuen Junior College, where I teach, has offered content-based courses since 1994. These may variously be referred to as content-based instruction (CBI), content-based language teaching (CBLT), or content and language integrated learning (CLIL) courses. Subjects include anthropology, life science, and geography, amongst others. Every teacher has their own approach. As the instructor for the geography course, my background in geography and environmental studies allows me

to provide knowledge of the issues and their interconnectedness, though time and the fact that students are non-majors studying in a second language limits how deeply they can be addressed.

Geography is a second-year elective course, though as students are required to take several of these electives to fulfill graduation requirements, they may not always take it out of interest in the subject. I do, however, assume that most *are* motivated out of interest and I make efforts to provide activities that they will enjoy. As they are English majors, most of the coursework is carried out in English, but using Japanese (L1) for expansion activities in the community outside of the classroom cannot be avoided. I also assume that any students participating in activities such as these, which are not mandatory, will be more motivated in general and should benefit from the further intellectual stimulation.

My participation in the LD30 Conference served to remind me of the benefits to learner development of fostering engagement and autonomy and helped me to develop a better understanding of how PBL could be applied to my situation.

CITIZEN SCIENCE (CS)

As a child growing up more or less in the middle of the forest in rural eastern Canada, observing nature was a daily routine. Watching the changes occur in our local blueberry field after drainage ditches were dug nearby and how the once bountiful wild fruit bushes gave way to scraggly spruce trees gave me an eye for observing cause and effect. Noting the changes brought on by the climate crisis to my current home in Hokkaido has inspired me to try and use my content-based geography course for second-year English majors as a vehicle for increasing their awareness of the profound changes that will impact their lives in the near future.

Getting out into nature and having firsthand experiences is one of the best ways to see the situation, and I have considered the possibility of some kind of field trip, but the logistics are challenging. As a result, I have been constantly on the lookout for *something* that could serve as an opportunity to expose my students to Hokkaido's natural environment and also be a learning experience for them.

When I eventually found a project that seemed to be a straightforward participatory activity with little barrier to entry, I decided to introduce it to my students and to estimate their level of possible interest. Researching the background of this project called Herpthon, which I detail later in this section, I came to be aware that this type of activity fell into the category of so-called citizen science (CS), defined in easy-to-understand terms by Vohland et al. (2021, p. 1):

> "Citizen science broadly refers to the active engagement of the general public in scientific research tasks. Citizen science is a growing practice in which scientists and citizens collaborate to produce new knowledge for science and society."

Although anyone with interest and curiosity can engage with science in general, my interpretation of the concept of CS is that non-specialists, such as my students, would be able to have their hands-on interaction with nature become an effective learning experience by contributing to projects run by researchers or other groups with specific scientific goals.

In a sense, sharing is at the root of CS. Even non-specialists can engage with important scientific research in a variety of ways. Members of the general public can help scientists to better use their time by assisting with mundane and time-consuming, but crucial, tasks that might otherwise take scientists away from doing what they do best. By becoming involved, citizen scientists can not only help scientists perform their crucial research more efficiently, but also increase their own knowledge of the issue, or acquire new knowledge and understanding that they can then further share with their circle of acquaintances, family, etc. Learners as citizen scientists can be expected to enrich awareness within and among their current communities, and to join new communities, which will also benefit from such participation.

Figure 1 illustrates the three goals that are associated with CS (Kobori, 2022). I feel that these fit in well with my hopes for what learners will take away from my course. They will likely align with the aims of almost any course as well.

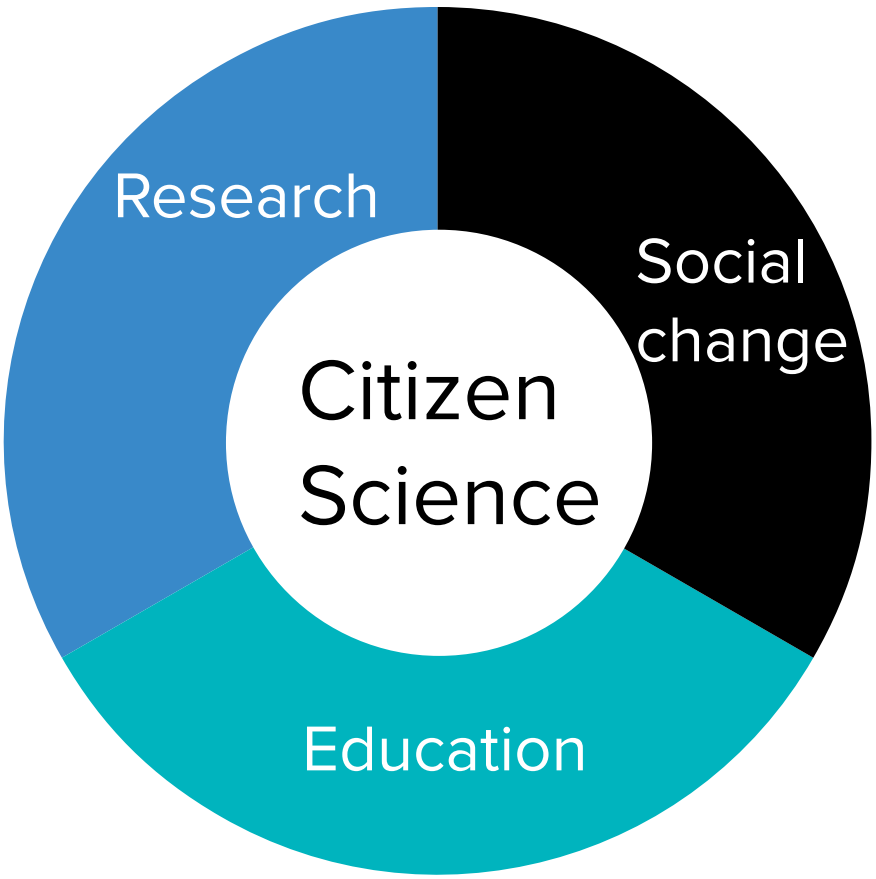

Figure 1: Three goals of CS (adapted from Kobori, 2022)

Various studies point to the benefits of participation in CS, even for those who are not initially familiar with the background of the project, or even science in general. According to Marley et al. (2022), CS is an example of "real life research projects" (RLRP) which can provide data for scientists while also increasing the confidence and engagement of students. It is most effective if related to the students' field of study (science majors) but does not have to be. A study by Mitchell et al. (2017), found that although student participants lost some confidence in the quality of data collected, the experience can encourage them to improve their data collection approach. In the context of my non-science major students, I hope for and foresee their increased awareness of scientific issues, allowing them to engage more proactively in conversations on related topics within and outside of their current communities.

Although the concept of CS appears relatively easy to embrace, the next challenge lies in identifying examples of CS that learners can participate in. Quick searches on the internet seem to suggest that CS projects are fairly common in North America and Europe. In my own teaching situation at Hokusei Gakuen, in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan, options are limited. My approach toward incorporating CS is to identify projects currently in progress that the students could join with a minimum amount of advance preparation. As CS projects will have started before my course and continue after it has finished, student participation will only be transient with regard to the CS project itself, but it can be hoped that some of them may be motivated to continue after the course and even after graduation.

Despite a first attempt in the spring 2023 semester, my students have not as yet actually participated in CS projects. I am planning to use CS projects in my geography classes from April this year (2024),

so I have spent time trying to find appropriate examples to present to them as options. One activity that takes place in various locations in or near Sapporo is tree planting. Tree planting may not at first appear to be an example of CS, since contribution to research is one of the stated goals of CS. However, the approach to planting trees has evolved from simply getting as many trees in the ground as possible, with little regard to what varieties were present previously, to reproducing levels of diversity that would contribute to more sustainable forests as the trees mature.

Participating in ecologically planned tree planting projects can educate the participants, interested citizens in general, and my students in particular, as to why it is important to not just plant any tree, but that the selection is part of a scientifically conceived plan to obtain the best results in terms of ecology, biodiversity and benefits to people as well. Therefore, tree planting that involves monitoring may also be an engaging type of CS (Idris et al., 2022).

By joining a project that utilizes a platform such as iNaturalist (https://www.inaturalist.org/) for posting photographs taken by both citizen scientists and expert researchers, the non-specialists can learn how to take photographs that will be of use to the research in question. For example, many species, whether animal or plant, are difficult to distinguish on the basis of a single photograph, due to similarities in appearance. Photographs that are taken from various angles allow distinguishing features of the subject organism to be identified. Although explanations of these techniques can be found on the platform in various forms, explicit instructions to students from the project coordinators and/or from the instructor can provide additional guidance and scaffolding.

The popularity of iNaturalist with educators at many levels has meant that there have been instances of mostly disinterested participants posting inappropriate or non-useful data to the site, causing some frustration to the community. As a result, a more general app called Seek (https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app) was developed and is recommended for projects where learner participation is mandatory. Unlike iNaturalist, users need not be identifiable, and the anonymity is suitable for younger learners. This platform can be useful for some educators wishing to engage their learners in CS from a young age and in situations where participation is required. However, this does not suit my approach.

My first attempt at interesting my students in participating in CS was an event called Herpthon 2023 (https://koke-koke.com/Kamui/archives/category/herpthon). The name is derived from “Herpetological Marathon”, and the concept is for ‘teams’ of participants to take photographs of (living or dead) reptiles and amphibians found in Hokkaido. Participants are also invited to make recordings, for example of frogs croaking, since photographing them may be difficult. An incentive of sorts existed in the form of a competition for the best photograph taken during the 2023 iteration of the marathon. In addition to the fact that there are a limited number of amphibian and reptile species in Hokkaido, meaning less complexity, the period of the ‘event’ corresponded quite closely to the length of the university’s first semester. I felt that this would also help me to ease into the experience of CS in general. Although a handful of students expressed some interest, in the end none actually took up the challenge. An earlier start and better explanation may have helped, but the main reaction from students was revulsion at the idea of having any interaction with ‘uncute’ animals such as frogs and snakes, whether living or dead, so a psychological hurdle to participation exists and I will need to think carefully about which projects to introduce.

Whether it is photographing amphibians and reptiles for a project such as Herpthon, planting trees in an ecologically sound manner, or any other activity that contributes to scientific research, understanding or practical outcomes, there can be various levels of complexity or depth of participation. Haklay (2013, p. 115) proposes four “Levels of participation and engagement in Citizen Science projects” as compiled in Figure 2.

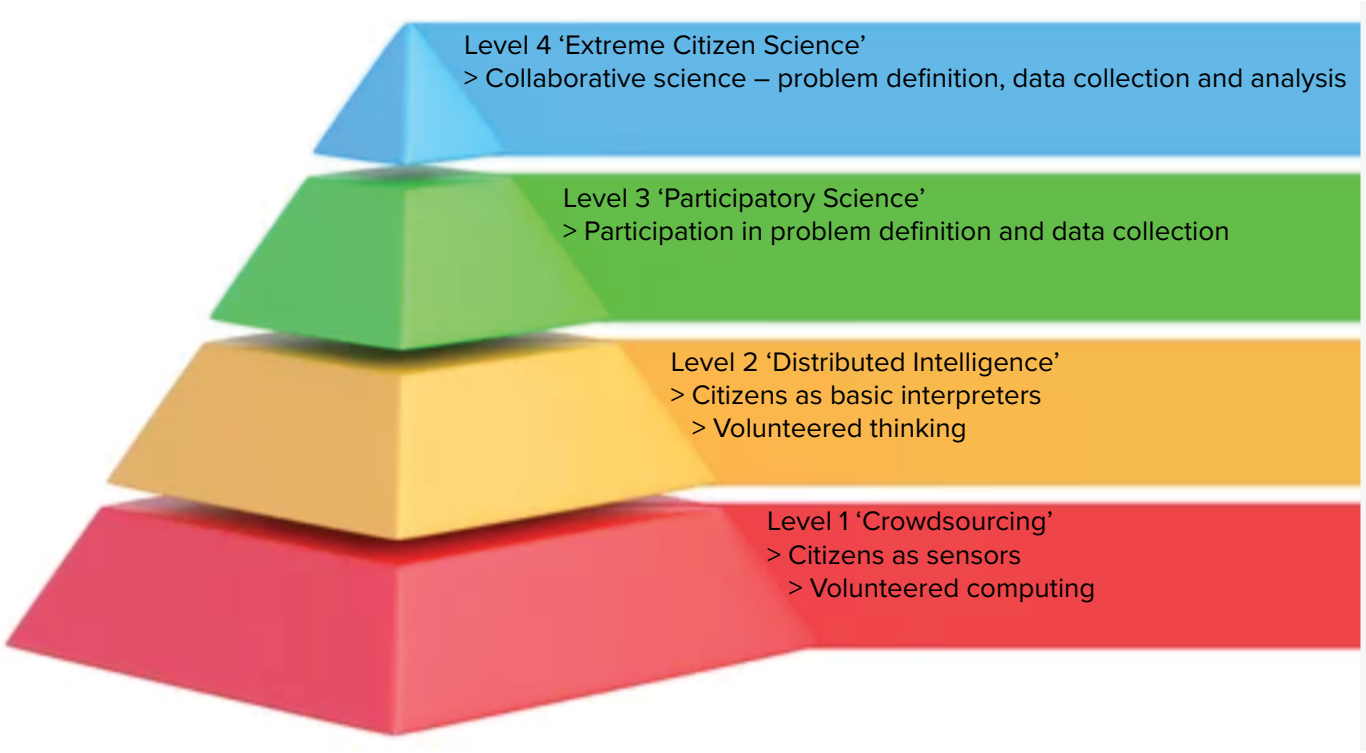

Figure 2: Levels of participation and engagement in citizen science projects (from Haklay, 2013)

As they involve less of a deep understanding and expertise on the part of participating students, Level 1 and Level 2 are of most interest and relevance to my situation. Level 3, involving data collection, may also be possible as the students gain more confidence in their ability to participate. However, it seems reasonable to assume that basic data collection of the kind that my students might engage in, such as photographing animals and recording other relevant information about them and when or where they were spotted, would be included in Level 1 participation.

Another CS project that may interest my students is the "Hanamaru Maruhana (Bumblebee National Census) Project". This project is introduced on Fukuoka University's Faculty of Commerce, Citizen Science Research Centre website and may attract more student interest than the "Herpthon" project. The center identifies it as a good example of a citizen science project that fits into the Level 1 'Crowdsourcing' category (Haklay, 2013), since participants from around the country provide photographs they take of bees, and which are used to create a census for bumblebees. As this appears to be an ongoing project, it may be a good addition to the choices of project for students, given its relevance to geography topics such as ecosystems and farming/resources. In Hokkaido, *Bombus terrestris*, the buff-tailed bumblebee, common in Europe, is classified as a 'designated invasive alien species' and there is concern that it will displace the native bumblebees, so participation in the project can raise learner awareness of the situation, its effect on Hokkaido ecosystems, and also encourage them to think about the consequences for and impacts on agriculture in Hokkaido. That may also motivate them to create connections between participation in the activity and their choice of foods to use in a second semester in-class activity where, in groups, they research locally produced foods to create a 'Hokkaido Breakfast' and locate the production regions on a map of the prefecture.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND PBL

Although incorporating CS into my course is not a formal example of environmental education, a model outlining the progression in environmental education from an initial focus on information proceeding through to action, introduced by Henderson and cited in Jacobson (1999), is a good summary of my expectations for the path that learners would follow (Figure 3).

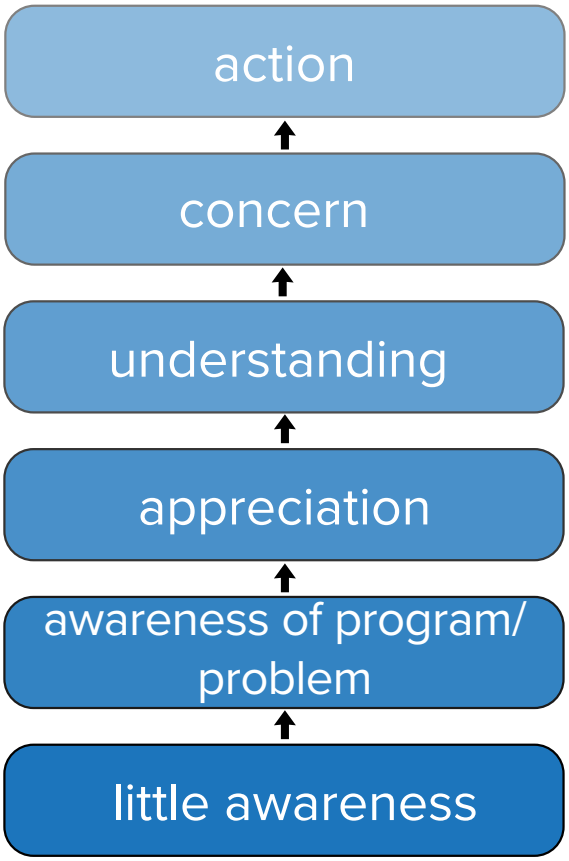

Figure 3: Awareness-to-action model (adapted from Jacobson, 1999)

Jacobson emphasizes that even as familiarity with the program/problem increases, "...the first few levels of the hierarchy always should be included in educational programs, even for adolescents and adults, because the awareness phase of learning remains important and enjoyable for mature learners," (Jacobson, 1999, p. 239). I also agree with this philosophy and approach to education on environmental issues, as it will serve to remind learners of what they should be trying to achieve. The life experiences of project participants will place them at varying levels of the model from the outset, but through continual stimulation of awareness and understanding of the environmental issues, all should be able to make progress rapidly to a stage where they can engage in meaningful action.

Despite having an understanding and image of what an approach based on environmental education principles entails, before attending the LD30 Conference, I did not have a clear image of how to integrate a CS project into my course in a structured manner. Attending a presentation on PBL at the conference given by Robert Moreau introduced me to a possible framework for introducing CS.

In his presentation, Moreau (2023) introduced Stoller and Myers' (2020) five-stage framework, consisting of preparation, information gathering, information processing, display and reflection. I felt that this was something that I could use. Given that I am in the preliminary phase of trying to incorporate citizen science activities into my course as a complement to the main (assessed) content, I will not attempt the more advanced stages of display and reflection. In my approach, preparation will involve introducing the concepts behind citizen science and the background of the projects which will be featured as options for the learners to engage with. Information gathering and processing at this point in time will not be highly structured, nor given overly strong emphasis. Instead, there will be more emphasis on the experiences directly had by students as they participate in their chosen projects, and the awareness generated as they come to realize the significance and/or utility of the information/data that they are contributing to the project.

Although the use of PBL in my course seems a good fit, this was my first exposure to it, and none of my colleagues at my school use it either. It will obviously take some time and research to obtain a clear grasp of how it is best implemented and how to approach using it effectively. As part of my investigation into PBL, I found the emphasis by McDowell (2017) on "confidence in learning attributes" (growth mindset, assessment-capable learning and collaboration) and "competence in learning levels" (surface, deep and transfer) to have strong appeal, and the idea that PBL could facilitate the cultivation of these in my learners further increased my interest in this method.

Although face-to-face work on tasks and collaboration is a very important skill for learners, it is also true that some of them find it very difficult to work with others in a face-to-face situation. I have experience with a variety of learners who have expressed misgivings about being required to operate in such contexts. The use of technology, with which many of them are more comfortable than direct human interaction, may help to alleviate this, as well as enhancing overall collaboration. I think that finding CS projects that also allow this type of more indirect participation is one way of accommodating such learners.

The times that we live in present enormous variety in how we can engage with science and with each other and as Busch (2013, p. 209) writes, it can be anticipated that introducing learners to websites or applications which involve them in CS endeavors will, "nurture a collective effort, a sense of collaboration and community that is particular to these times" independent of the original ostensible goal of learning a second language.

CONCLUSION

With all these still-expanding connections being made, I further appreciate the experience of attending LD30, and even feel excitement at the prospect of bringing all these threads together, whether in my current courses, or in a future course that I may design and teach. The exposure to PBL in particular will help with how I structure my approach. A project related to ecosystems and invasive species introduced by McDowell (2017), despite being a kindergarten project, convincingly illustrates the suitability of CS for use in a PBL environment. Activating student interest is an ongoing challenge but exposing them to examples of what their peers are capable of achieving, and also by giving them the opportunity to 'get their hands dirty' in CS projects, should engage their interest and curiosity. All these experiences hold the potential to raise their awareness of a range of issues, awareness that they will pass on to members of their communities and also engage their capacity to think critically. That to me is a very worthwhile outcome.

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Development Sustained: Searching for Fresh Sustenance

ABSTRACT

In this article, I describe the evolution of Introduction to UN Studies, a four-skills-one-semester course in which EFL students research, discuss, and present on topics in discussion at the UN on behalf of a Member State. Its evolution is intertwined with my role as Faculty Adviser for a student Model United Nations (MUN) committee at a Japanese university in Chiba, a role without which there would have been no course. After observing members of our MUN committee at a student conference in the USA, I recognised the need for a course that emphasised specific speaking skills. Since 2020, the course has gone through four iterations and, from 2021, has been taught at a second university in Tokyo, serving a wider community than the initial group. In my LD30 Conference presentation, I discussed responses from over 70 students to a survey I administered and sought ideas in my search for fresh sustenance.

Keywords: course development, faculty adviser, global studies, MUN

DEVELOPMENT ACT 1: DAMASCENE MOMENTS

In late 2018, I was approached by the incumbent Faculty Adviser of my university's Model United Nations (MUN) student group and asked to take over in March 2019. Having experience in studying world politics, I accepted his request and followed his advice. In April 2019, I registered to participate in the November 2019 student MUN conference in Washington DC. We expected to send eight students and chose from a list of countries that required a delegation of that number. Most delegations with eight members sat on four committees, and from our choices, the organisers gave us the challenging and delicate task of representing the *Syrian Arab Republic*. From May to November, I gave weekly assistance and advice to students in the MUN group who worked on topics for four of eight UN committees that students would sit on at the conference (see NMUN 1). Prior to flying to the US, this advice culminated in the students submitting four position papers to the conference organisers.

1.1 PREPARATIONS

Preparing students to role-play being a Syrian delegate meant that I had to put them in the unenviable position of representing Bashar al-Assad's government – and in a second language, to boot. This may have presented an ethical dilemma for some students, impossible and immoral some might say, but it was a student role play for a conference in Washington with almost 1000 students from around the world. These students had every incentive to learn their lines and rise to their roles. It was an opportunity to do well in an activity that requires creative thinking and the construction of

new identities. Factual topics were acted upon in a fictional dimension – on a stage, as it were, in the USA. We referred to the real world in the full knowledge that it was a simulation.

As the adviser, I assisted and encouraged students to develop the knowledge and language required to be a Syrian diplomat. They had to understand their topics and discuss ideas with delegates from other countries in DC. My dilemma was twofold: firstly, how realistically should I approach it, and, secondly, how could I prepare them for the language demands they would face? Should a faculty adviser consider confrontational claims that were available online and were welcomed by real Syrian diplomats? Maybe not, but in the spirit of the conference (whereby students 'acted' a role) I counselled them to take realistic positions in their committees - and this helped us to gain recognition through an *Honourable Mention Delegation* award, and plaudits for an *Outstanding Position Paper* in the General Assembly First Committee - the latter of which required awareness of geopolitical realities and having a realistic Syrian position (NMUN-DC 2019).

1.2 THE COURSE: WORKING ON DAMASCENE MOMENTS

After returning to Japan, I considered some Damascene moments that I experienced in DC when recognising the need for a course based on researching, discussing, and presenting on topics on behalf of a Member State. I fully realised the importance of Agenda 2030 and the need to reference SDGs more skilfully when discussing global issues. I was informed that such a course would have to be of service to a wider community, but, perhaps because the university had won at least one position paper award at the NMUN (National Model United Nations) tournament in Washington DC for four consecutive years, the proposal for a new course was accepted and implemented from May 2020. The course focused on contemporary topics, with an emphasis on how each country could help work towards meeting sustainable development goals while using activities that optimised discussion. I continued being the faculty adviser to the university MUN group and now taught *Introduction to UN Studies*.

DEVELOPMENT ACT 2 – YEAR 1: WHEN HERCULES SEIZED US

Table 1: The course taught at 2 universities (2020 to 2024)

	Year	University 1 English Communication majors	University 2 Politics, Economics & Law majors
1	2020	Introduction to UN Studies* (online)	
2	2021	Introduction to UN Studies* (online)	English C 1** (online) English C 2*** (online)
3	2022	Introduction to UN Studies* (classroom)	English C 1** (classroom) English C 2*** (classroom)
4	2023	Introduction to UN Studies* (classroom)	English C 1** (classroom) English C 2*** (classroom)

* Elective for English Communication majors

** Compulsory for first year Politics and Economics majors

*** Compulsory for first year Law majors

I therefore spent the months preceding the start of the academic year 2020-21 planning a new course to cater for the needs of students in the MUN group and also for those outside the group who were interested in the topics. It was designed to focus on discussion skills without the use of a textbook, and I sought to recycle material from past conferences and use topics from the UN News website. COVID-19, however, made its fateful appearance and prevented the classes from being taught in person. Despite this uncertainty, I proceeded to teach the course online and registered the university for the 2020

NMUN-DC conference. We were able to plan for what would be an online-only conference in November 2020, where we had the challenge of representing the *Argentine Republic*.

The students who registered for the first iteration of the elective *Introduction to UN Studie*s course were mainly MUN group members. Class topics were from contemporary UN News items and were chosen because of their relevance to committees that students would sit on at the conference. Representing countries in small groups, the students researched issues related to a pandemic, an environmental issue, and discrimination. The MUN committee had separate weekly meetings where they could concentrate on their research and issues related to committees they would sit on in the conference (see NMUN 2). There was much cross-pollination between the course and the group, and the course helped to unify the students, which, in turn, helped students focus on the conference. Student evaluations were based on class performance, vocabulary tests, and written reflections.

In the online conference, students were hampered by Wi-Fi issues. They were unable to use some skills that we had studied in the course; however, the persistence of the students won them admiration for their 'herculean' efforts. They had researched professionally before the conference, and because of their erudition eight students won recognition via four *Outstanding Position Paper* awards (NMUN-DC, 2020). They achieved this through their hard work, but the course had undoubtedly played a major part. After the first year of the course, the university had won its highest number of awards at NMUN-DC.

DEVELOPMENT ACT 3 - YEAR 2: AND CARACAS FACED SANCTIONS...

Following the MUN group's success in the student conference, the evening elective *Introduction to UN Studies* course attracted more students from the university. I also started teaching the course at a second university in Tokyo – as a CLIL course titled *English C* to students from the Faculty of Law (and also to Economics and Politics students). Partially because of the increased workload, but mainly because of the global importance of SDGs, I chose to use an SDG-focused textbook (Sasajima et al, 2021) for themes and basic readings of topics that could be used in role plays and diplomatic simulations. The pattern of the course in 2021 was almost indistinguishable from the 2022 curriculum in Table 2 below.

In 2021, however, using Google Forms, I tested students on vocabulary knowledge, something which I phased out in 2022 in favour of written reflections that students could upload onto the class Google Classroom site. In class, I designed role plays based around one or more of the SDGs that we had studied and followed this with diplomatic simulations that replicated the type of discussions and speeches that MUN students experience at a MUN conference. Student evaluations were again based on class performance, vocabulary tests, and written reflections. At the end of the course, I continued an ungraded experiment that I tried at the end of year one, viz., to get all students (countries) to work together and write a working paper on one topic.

Table 2: Introduction to UN Studies - 2022

	Class	**Homework**
1	Introduction. Quiz! Choose a country	World Factbook data
2	Your country: culture, history & geopolitics	Presentations
3	Role Play 1: *A Pandemic*	Unit 1 / SDG 1 and 2
4	Topic #1 – Poverty	Unit 2 / SDG 3
5	Topic #2 – Health	Unit 5- 6 / SDG 6-7
6	Topic #3 – Water & Energy	Discussion questions
7	Discussion and reflection	Role Play prep
8	Role Play 2: *A Pressing Issue*	Unit 3 / SDG 4
9	Topic #4 – Education	Unit 4 / SDG 5+10

	Class	Homework
10	Topic #5 – Gender	Unit 7 / SDG 8
11	Topic #6 – Work & Economic Growth	Discussion questions
12	Discussion and reflection	Role Play prep
13	Preparation for role play 3	Role Play prep
14	Role Play 3: *An Urgent Issue*!	Role Play prep
15	Final discussions and reflections	Reflections

As in 2019 and 2020, I registered the MUN group again for the Washington DC conference. In 2021, we were assigned to represent the *Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*. Due to successes in past conferences, two full-time teachers were scheduled to assist the MUN group committee meetings, and we prepared ourselves to represent a country with two leaders: President Maduro and Western-backed President Guaido. It was a fascinating educational assignment, and we had a student leader who would have (with the use of a fake moustache) passed as a double for Nicolas Maduro! Unfortunately, we were unable to perform in DC that year: the conference was in-person, and the university's COVID-era school policies were not revoked in time. We had our costumes; we knew our lines – but we could not perform that year. In 2021, though, some of the MUN group participated in an online Harvard Model United Nations (HMUN) conference.

DEVELOPMENT ACT 4 - YEAR 3: A KINSHASA CURTAILMENT

In 2022, the course was taught again in the classroom at the two universities following a return to face-to-face classes after the pandemic. As in the first two years, class one saw students choose a country to represent. For the rest of the semester, students studied topics through activities that led to three role plays. Again, the role plays were based on and designed around current global issues that were in discussion at the UN and, if possible, related to the NMUN-DC conference. Alongside the use of the textbook, I continued to create worksheets that simplified UN News articles and made more use of other resources, such as Jeremy Sachs's annually-updated SDG Dashboard (see Sachs et al, 2023) and various other news databases. Students were now evaluated on class performance and written reflections. There were no vocabulary tests. Post-course evaluations showed that students were happy with the course.

In April 2022, for the fourth time, I registered to represent a country at the NMUN-DC conference, and, because of a student request, we applied and were accepted to represent the *Democratic Republic of the Congo* (DRC) at NMUN-DC 2022. Immediately, the student group held weekly meetings with a focus on the possible committees we would sit on. However, because of issues related to COVID-19, the student group was unable to secure funds, but having already registered for the conference, we sought to attend a separate NMUN conference in Kobe (NMUN-Kobe). We were allowed to do so, but on the condition that some students represent the *Republic of Madagascar*. Representing the DRC and Madagascar was a challenge that exceeded our capacity, but the experience was memorable, and the course was more popular than ever.

DEVELOPMENT ACT 5 - YEAR 4: A FINE FINNISH?

By the end of 2023, the elective *Introduction to UN Studies* had had four iterations, and the compulsory same-content *English C* courses three. They were working better than ever. *Introduction to UN Studies* attracted almost 30 students for an evening class, and the *English C* courses had just over the same number. It seems that the format (of putting students into country groups) and the topics that I had chosen were popular. For the fourth iteration, I changed the course textbook to Yoshihara et al's (2022) discussion-based SDG text because the text provided a stable and engaging base for

a wider group of students. I still designed my own material though and one self-designed activity is referred to in the *Tangible Benefits from Intangible Practices* article in this volume.

In November 2023, MUN students from my university were able to participate in the NMUN-DC conference for the first time since 2020. The impact of COVID-19 had grave financial implications for the group, but through the determination of students, the group survived. Without my role as Faculty Adviser for this group, there would have been no impetus to create the course covered in this paper, and the cessation of the group may have led to the end of *Introduction to UN Studies*.

If the end was nigh for the group (it isn't), then the finale was a fantastic one. Fantastic in the sense of extraordinary and exceptional. After registering the university in April for a country that required four students, the organisers met our request to represent the *Republic of Finland*. After Syria, Argentina, Venezuela, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Madagascar – we now had Finland, the newest member of NATO. Compared to our previous assignments, this was a country with a broadly similar geopolitical orientation to Japan, but as with all of the above – we had to act. We had to play a role. We had to rehearse our lines. With the support of many teachers, including Bladimie Germain and Chelanna White, the students had a great team that helped them prepare.

The university did everything within its power to help us, and with a student crowdfunding campaign (Campfire, 2023), four students and the faculty adviser were able to attend the DC conference in November 2023. The students prepared exceptionally well, and their performance was extraordinary. The four students (or, as I christened them, the 'Finnish Four') worked together to make an impact in discussions and the production of conference Working Papers. They achieved the university's best-ever performance in DC (RU 2). The four won a *Distinguished Delegation Award* for the first time and three papers were given *Outstanding Position Awards* (NMUN-DC, 2023). All of these students had at some point in their university lives taken and/or assisted in *Introduction to UN Studies*.

THE LD30 CONFERENCE: SUSTENANCE SUPPLIED

In July 2023, I distributed questionnaires to students from the three courses, and through their responses I obtained sustenance. Below I shall discuss the findings of the questionnaire and add my comments together with input from participants at the LD30 Conference. My questions sought to discover if students were very satisfied, satisfied, or not satisfied. I had been satisfied with the way the course had evolved, and through discussions at the conference I realised that I unknowingly used many of John Hattie's (2012) recommended practices for teachers – such as having high expectations (p. 81), focusing on effect over method (p.83), and working to activate and evaluate learning (p. 86).

I shall now briefly comment on student evaluation of the textbook, the topics, and Google Classroom, and afterward discuss student satisfaction, role-plays, and speeches in more depth. There was almost unanimous satisfaction reported for the choice of textbook and topics. 77% of all students were *very satisfied* with the topics, which is rewarding as in 2023 I used challenging topics such as anti-gay laws in Uganda (Madowo & Feleke, 2023) for the class on gender, and the situation in Haiti for the class on poverty. To make these classes work, I had to make sure students used Google Classroom to complete homework before class and after class. This may have been one reason why a majority of students were *satisfied* (49%) more than *very satisfied* (44%). Possibly I need to reduce the amount of homework that I give students.

i. Student satisfaction

I was happy that almost 80% of students from *Introduction to UN Studies* and an average of 71% of students from all three courses were very satisfied. I placed a lot of demands on myself in creating material, and on students in preparing for class and in writing reflections: to see such a positive response is pleasing. The overwhelmingly positive responses show that the course was worthwhile for a wider community. The vast majority of students took the course to further their knowledge and improve their English skills while doing so. They benefited because they studied topics that

deepened their understanding of global issues, and in the case of the Politics, Economics, and Law students in the English C courses this connected to their major studies in Japanese.

ii. Role plays and discussions

I was satisfied with the organisation of role plays and discussions. Before discussion and role plays began, students worked in pairs on questions based on their homework. Role plays and discussions began after students had the time to understand the basics. In the case of anti-gay laws referred to above, the question `How should we respond to anti-LGBTQ laws in Uganda?' was used as a source for discussions - and for a role play. Students were given up to five 'sub' questions that would allow them to consider their responses. The questions were discussed within country groups at first, and, afterwards, as a role-play, between the country groups. Before the discussions and the role-play, the teacher encouraged students to consider their country contexts and to use the homework worksheets together with additional data put on a PowerPoint. Over three-quarters of students were *very satisfied* with such role plays and discussions, but I think there is room for improvement by spending more time attending to questions arising from homework. In other words, I should spend more time answering the students' questions following their homework assignments. By doing this, more students will understand the topics more clearly and feel more confident when they move on to discuss the topic and finally take part in the role-play.

iii. Giving speeches

Speeches followed the discussion and role plays and were based on an opinion that I introduced about the class topic. For example, in the case of our lesson on anti-LGBTQ laws in Uganda, I informed the class that the Lao People's Democratic Republic had a proposal that, while respecting Ugandan sovereignty, called to protect and promote human rights for all and called for the rescission of discriminatory laws. Each country had the opportunity to respond to the opinion and create a short 'position speech'. They were informed that they should spend between 30 to 90 seconds on their speeches.

The majority of students, again, were *very satisfied* but 40% were merely satisfied with the speeches – and 1% were not satisfied. The speeches were a part of every role-play class (and sometimes regular classes) and could be written about in their reflections. To make students even more satisfied, perhaps there is a need to standardise the speech component of the course and enforce total participation. However, doing that would take away from student agency and make teacher authority a little too overt: I believe that asking students to volunteer to make speeches promotes student empowerment.

THE SEARCH CONTINUES

To make the course work, and meet the demands of the student group, there has been pressure to consider contemporary topics and new situations. This will continue if the course and my responsibilities continue. However, it has been rewarding to see students thrive and empower themselves in situations that I helped engender. The courses that I have written have been successful in various iterations, and it seems that the right mix of activities and topics has been used. The cross-pollination between the course and the student group has been mutually beneficial, but perhaps now is the time to refine my approach and the activities. I know how to sustain the development of such courses, so perhaps I am well-placed to teach in a way that ensures that no one is left behind.

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I Let a Group of Learners Take Ownership of Their English Communication Course, and THIS Happened!!

ABSTRACT

In this reflective article I tell the unfolding story of an English communication course for first-year students at the University of Fukui (School of Global and Community Studies). In this course, students were given agency and control over the course content and logistics. In the beginning, learners engaged in self-assessment of their spoken English; then, they responded to a survey inquiring about their language needs and goals and desired focus for the course content. The results showed that learners wanted to prioritize explicit vocabulary learning and idiomatic language, with fluency training a close third. The learners then negotiated the course syllabus and identified topics of interest. Through their decisions, the course was divided into three units focused on self-expression, conversation strategies, and English for interaction on campus, respectively. In this account I reflect on learner achievements, their development of agency, and the challenges and rewards of adopting this approach.

Keywords: EFL, learner agency, learner development, negotiated syllabus

When I presented this story as a poster at the LD30 conference, I received many comments and questions from a supportive audience of colleagues, so it is only appropriate to thank them here at the beginning of this extended reflection. One question, in particular, stayed with me, mostly unanswered, after the conference: Why did I decide to give my students almost full control of a university course that I am eventually responsible for? Serendipitously, the kind reviewers who first read a draft of this piece asked similar questions: What was the spark that got me started on this track? What was my inspiration? At this point, it is only fair to try and answer these questions before narrating the unfolding of my learners' story.

RATIONALE

I am a passionate language learner and enjoy studying new languages independently. I also strongly believe that learning is growth and growth is something we strive for as human beings. I always hope to share my enthusiasm for learning with my students, but I have not encountered success in this since my English classes moved first online, and then hybrid, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the meantime, I have also become increasingly frustrated with the one-size-fits-all approach of the many EFL textbooks I used in the past, which never seemed to cater to the needs of my students. Furthermore, they tended to guide my teaching to cover what the authors of the textbooks thought should be learned, rather than what the learners wanted to practice.

In 2023, I had the opportunity to resume having classes in person, which coincided with the structural change in the English curriculum at my department described below. In the little time I was given to plan a new English Communication course, I decided to forego adopting a textbook and instead design a learning experience tailored to the students who would eventually join my course. The factors that influenced my decision were my research interest in learning awareness, past experiences teaching English speaking, and the many ideas exchanged interacting with the talented colleagues of the JALT Learner Development SIG. However, the fundamental reason why I decided to give (almost) complete ownership of the course to my learners is something that I understood through the experience of emergency remote teaching: *to trust my students* and acknowledge that they are fundamentally competent language learners and, when given the opportunity, can make language learning choices based on what they would like to achieve with English in their future.

I started the semester equipped with little more than hope and expectation, a mostly blank Google Classroom course page, and a blank syllabus. Then, *this* happened.

CONTEXT

First-year students at the School of Global and Community Studies (GCS) at the University of Fukui take a total of four compulsory English language courses in the spring semester. In 2023, the department offered for the first time four additional workshop-style courses for students desiring a more intensive learning experience. One of these four courses is called English Communication Workshop – an inoffensive-looking course title that attracted 43 applicants. The students were further divided into two sections of 22 and 21 to ensure they found themselves in a learning environment where they could speak English often and consistently. I taught one section of the course – or rather I should say that I let the 21 students take control of their learning experience. This short account is the story of what happened in class and outside and what the students and I have taken away from this experiment.

The rationale for this course is based on an ongoing KAKEN research project aiming to make learners more aware of their development as speakers of English through extensive reflection, progress tracking, and progress review. Some of the fundamental principles of the original research project that have informed this course design are learner *agency*, *choice*, *purpose*, and *accountability*. For brevity and at the risk of oversimplifying, I will define *agency* as a learner's ability and willingness to play an active role in their learning; *choice* as the feeling of having control over equally meaningful options; *purpose* as the understanding of the goal of a language task and its connection to a learner's needs; and *accountability* as the learner's acceptance of the responsibility they take on as a result of being an active influence in their (and others') learning.

As a preamble to the story, I need to state some of the situational matters that the course designers (that is, the students and I) needed to work with as they are relevant to the course goals or timeline. First, studying abroad is an integral part of the GCS curriculum, and 20 of the 21 students expressed a desire to study abroad (one could not, as their status in Japan is already that of an exchange student); therefore, the overall focus for developing communicative skills in the course had been predetermined to be "English for campus life," which is understood as the communicative ability to interact in English with fellow students, instructors, and university staff members on academic matters. For the same reason, the course also integrates an academic vocabulary component to support the learners' efforts in achieving the TOEFL score they need to be eligible to study abroad. Finally, it is necessary to point out that students enrolled in this course meet 30 times a semester (twice a week rather than the more common once-a-week format found in Japanese universities).

COURSE START AND EARLY DECISIONS

Upon meeting the students for the first time, I offered a brief orientation, including an explanation of the nature of the English Communication course. To avoid talking too long and to ensure that the learners experienced the four principles of agency, choice, purpose, and accountability from the beginning of the course, I presented them with a small-scale puzzle informed by previous personal forays into exploratory practice. For this introductory activity, I asked the students to recall how they met their new friends one week prior during the university orientation, how they introduced themselves, and what they talked about. Then, we compared the results of their brainstorming and role-play of spontaneous conversations with a set of typical 'first encounter' situations from EFL textbooks to appreciate their differences. Finally, the learners proceeded to generate a model 'first day on campus' conversation in English that sounded as realistic as possible for them.

During the second class meeting, I prompted students to self-assess their English proficiency using the CEFR-J descriptors for *spoken interaction* and *sustained monologue* (Tono & Negishi, 2020). Accordingly, 10 learners evaluated their speaking abilities at the B1 level, 8 at the B2 level, and 3 at the C1+ level. The average self-assessed proficiency of this group was slightly higher than past cohorts of students who used the same diagnostic tool for placement in our department. While this is not a factor I considered in the early phases of the course, in hindsight it may have influenced my confidence in giving the learners carte blanche. Reassured that the group had a sufficiently high level of English to understand what I was asking of them, and why, I let them free to start taking ownership of the course and make their first decisions on their expected outcomes for the course, the logistics involved, and the course content.

Using Google Forms, I asked students to rank six options in order of relevance to their language learning needs. The options were labeled with keywords whose meaning was negotiated in class before starting the poll (*fluency*, *vocabulary and expression*, *grammar*, *"natural English*," *pronunciation and intonation*, and *TOEFL practice*). We conducted the poll in class, computed the results together, and sorted out the three most chosen options. Then, through class brainstorming, we clarified each focus further to reflect exactly what the learners meant. This brought me to rewrite and number the learners' choices with the purpose of creating statements that could be easily referenced (although I realize now that the use of ESL/EFL jargon, which I adopted for the sake of precision, may have been inappropriate for the target audience).

Student decision #1: *focus on vocabulary-building activities.*

Student decision #2: *focus on idiomatic language and collocations.*

Student decision #3: *focus on reducing hesitation and code-switching.*

The second week started with the idea of co-constructing a negotiated syllabus (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). I had to contribute more than I hoped for in this activity: talking to the learners, I realized that as of the second week of their university enrollment, they were unfamiliar with the idea of a syllabus. Nevertheless, we managed to identify a set of "core features" that they wanted to include in the course description. As a general sentiment, the learners mentioned that they hoped to (1) learn the kind of English that they could use when studying abroad; (2) become more comfortable talking about themselves and the things of their immediate interest; and (3) practice communication strategies to make their English conversation more natural in structure and pace. I accepted the students' idea to build a course on these three pillars and guided them in arranging the goals in a sequence that resonated with the CEFR-J descriptors. This process of brainstorming, in which I participated in a facilitating capacity rather than actively making suggestions, resulted in a fourth student decision:

Student decision #4: *divide the course into three units.*

(self-expression, weeks 1–5; conversation strategies, weeks 6–10, and English for interaction on campus, weeks 11–15).

Another resolution reached through a common agreement was how to evaluate the effort and results of the course. I introduced several assessment methods commonly used in EFL communication courses to the learners, including presentations, peer evaluation, and self-evaluation. This was certainly a hard choice to make, not only because the learners did not have any experience being "on the other side" of assessment but also because of the direct effect of their choice on their grades for this course. Eventually, we settled on experimenting with *test-making* (as opposed to test-taking). In other words, learners would be creating tests, quizzes, games, or other activities that could be used for assessment purposes, that creatively reuse the language they learned and practiced in communication as part of this course. I would then evaluate their tests based on a set of criteria that I suggested and the students approved. We also felt that this meta-assessment activity should come at the end of each course unit; thus, the decision was confirmed and evaluation was planned at the end of weeks 5, 10, and 15.

Student decision #5: *conduct assessment through test-making*.

At this stage, I intervened with one of the few unilateral decisions of this experimental course and added an academic vocabulary component, albeit limited to homework tasks. The reason for this was to reinforce the learners' efforts to expand their lexicon by providing more context and recall opportunities for the academic and TOEFL vocabulary items they learn as part of their English Reading Workshop; additionally, I thought that more vocabulary would expand the pool of content that the learners could draw from to create their assessment materials. The group seemingly understood and accepted this addendum to the course contents; however, I can only speculate about this since it was never mentioned in learner journals, and only rarely did a few groups use this specific academic vocabulary in the assessment activities they created.

AGENCY IN FULL SWING

The course developed according to plan until the end of week 10 when something happened that I did not expect – but thoroughly appreciated. In the poster I presented at the LD30 Conference, which inspired this account, I used the wording "students and instructor worked together to review the learners' original survey answers and make any due amendment to the course syllabus" – which is true but fails to highlight how this idea came from a place of learner ownership of the course and true agency – in other words, *the learners explicitly asked for an addition to the syllabus*. To be fair, some students had already been commenting that they were not completely happy with their pronunciation and intonation, especially during impromptu speaking activities. I made a point to help these learners individually in class, as I routinely do, and offered to give additional feedback about this in response to their voice-recorded reflection tasks. It was one of these students who first approached me as a spokesperson for the group to inquire whether it would be possible to add a pronunciation and intonation component to the course. I replied that this was their (the learners') course, not mine, and their wish was my command – which I recall leaving the student puzzled. Thus, I followed up with the idea of reviewing the initial course design in light of the learners' experience in the first ten weeks. We accomplished this through yet another survey, which confirmed the group's intention of adding explicit pronunciation and intonation activities to the course:

Student decision #6: *add a pronunciation training component*.

A question in the latter survey ("Do you feel any change in your ability to speak English compared to to *(sic)* the beginning of the semester?") also revealed an underlying issue that the learners were verbalizing in various ways, such as:

Learner 6: *These days I cannot come up with the exact words I want to say and I don't think that I am able to make myself understood in English.*

Learner 7: *Less and less time I stopped talking bacause I didn't know what I should express in English but sometimes I still don't know the word and stop.*

Learner 8: *I understand question's meaning, but I can't expression a word I wanna tell group members.*

Learner 20: *I'm able to say what I want to say more smoothly than before, but I still often feel frustrated that I couldn't tell the vocab I want to say.*

In the following class meeting, I presented the survey results highlighting how this issue could be alleviated through specific circumlocution tasks, i.e., "talking around" a word you do not know or cannot remember (like these ones). I confirmed that the concept of circumlocution was a fair approximation of what they meant, which brought us to:

Student decision #7: *practice circumlocution strategies.*

I most likely had some influence on this choice, but I believe this was still their decision – I only helped to identify exactly what they wanted and provided the language needed to talk about it. A further decision was instead decidedly unilateral, despite it being inspired by a response to the previous survey question:

Learner 21: *Even now, I sometimes react to my partner in Japanese. I really want to use only in English, but I still can't.*

The learner here is referring to their back-channeling, which is something I had previously hoped to work on in class. In fact, while I thought that the ability of this group to start and hold a conversation in English became remarkable, their emotional reactions to surprising statements and moments of conversational brilliance maintained a distinct flavor of their mother languages in some cases, which is understandable and I would argue appropriate; however, in most instances, their back-channeling was completely negotiated in their L1. When I presented this further direction to the learners, they accepted it seemingly with pleasure and immediately showed increased awareness and monitoring of their use of back-channeling.

COURSE END

The last few weeks of the course flew by with no particular obstacle or change. We took advantage of the early summer weather to get out of the classroom and learn and practice English for campus life around the campus – a nice change of pace while we kept focused on following the revised course plan. The learners used the second-to-last class meeting to make their third round of assessment materials, and we left the final class meeting open for closing remarks, final reflections, and to celebrate personal achievements, as the learners clearly felt that "something" had happened. The learners' reflections, given below in their voices, suggest they perceived appreciable improvements in their ability to engage in spoken communication beyond the basics, as well as a sense of accomplishment and progress of a tangible nature:

Learner 4: *I think this course achieved my progress very much because at first, my friends and I were talking about only the topic and we didn't extend the discussion, but now we talk a lot in English. This is a big change and a sign that everyone understands what we talk more than past. It was so helpful for us!!*

Learner 17: *I think it was perfect. At the beginning, I wonder that teacher didn't taught us so many things in classes, but after I finished this course, I knew that dealing with myself many problems*

and talking and talking is the best way to make progress. From this course, I got a big confidence about English and I got learn to speak English without hesitation.

Learner 19: *This course was very helpful for me to feel progress in communication in English. I think the conversation of paired work has become more voluminous.It was also good to learn about natural English.*

However, I must point out that the themes found in the learner reflections are not dramatically different from other courses I taught in the past based on the same fundamental rationale, but where control over course design and logistics was firmly in the hands of the instructor. For example, there was little to no reflection on their own active role in decision-making for the course – which could be argued was the most prominent difference between this and other English language courses the students were taking in parallel. Equally, when they talk or write about their achievements, they mention appreciable improvements in speaking fluency, confidence, active vocabulary, and pronunciation. They do not reflect on how they lived up to the challenge of taking control of their English Communication course. Yet, from the point of view of a privileged external observer, I think *this* – the THIS of the title – achievement is their most remarkable. Not having any data to go by, however, I can only present my takeaways in these directions as uncircumstantiated impressions resulting from my observations.

IMPRESSIONS

First and foremost, I need to praise the students for being brave enough to accept having "the burden" of agency and choice. They could have refused to engage or requested a more traditional approach to their English Communication course. Instead, they were soon on board with the idea of course ownership, were willing to negotiate our mutual expectations, and took their role as learners seriously, actively working together and thinking about their language goals and needs. This brought them to ponder about the purpose of their choices and of the class activities that I prepared for them based on their decisions. In turn, I believe this has given rise to an increased awareness of their learning and of their progress. This could also explain why this group committed to working both in and outside of the classroom – they seem to have understood the reason why certain take-home or on-demand tasks were assigned and how they influenced class activities, resulting in an unprecedented homework submission rate. In addition, having to work together not only for regular pair work or group work, as expected in any speaking-oriented course, but also to make impactful decisions on the direction of their learning, conceivably contributed to a positive and cooperative class atmosphere.

A positive side effect of adopting this approach is also increased transparency and intellectual honesty on my part; in other words, having to create class materials based on specific themes and addressing specific skills and having to make the purpose of each task explicit made me more aware of what I actually ask my students to do and more aware of what constitutes a realistic result for such tasks. In addition, this made me question some language task choices I made in the past (from unpopular ones, such as assigning homework for homework's sake, to popular ones, like playing games in class without providing a clear purpose and direct connection to the language items to practice).

ISSUES

Earlier in this reflective article, I described learner accountability as a learner accepting responsibility for their action oriented towards their learning and their peer's learning. Most of the 21 learners responded very well to this increased accountability – but not everyone. One student, in particular, did well in the classroom but was inconsistent with out-of-class decisions and work, meaning they, and sometimes the group they worked within, were not able to begin their communicative activities in class as smoothly, which impacted the group atmosphere at times. Reminding them of their

accountability alleviated the issue temporarily, which suggests at least one learner may not have understood or fully accepted their responsibility as an "owner of the course".

Two further concerns resulting from this full-fledged foray into learner ownership were due to the nature and logistics of decision-making. In particular, it was sometimes a struggle for the learners to verbalize what they wanted or needed to focus on, likely because of an understandable lack of awareness of the language learning processes and terminology. One such example is the common occurrence of expressions like "natural English" or "native English," which took some discussion to be finally understood as idiomatic expression and the use of collocations. Furthermore, group decision-making meant learners whose goals diverged significantly from others may have felt their ideas were underrepresented. A student, for example, reflected on this on multiple occasions, expressing some level of frustration as they advocated for a shorter time dedicated to English conversation and longer time spent on vocabulary learning and quizzes.

While I feel confident in saying that most of the course outcomes, planning, and content were indeed selected based on what the learners stated, I must also acknowledge that it would not have been possible to give more agency and still expect the course to have pedagogically sound structure and outcomes and make sense as a whole. While I felt comfortable making some adjustments to the student decisions to make sure they could be realistically implemented in class, I also had to make a small number of decisions myself (adding a focus on academic vocabulary and back-channeling). I would have preferred not to intervene at all, guided by the belief that the learners should make all of the relevant choices and have full ownership of the course. In a way making unilateral decisions felt uncomfortable, as if I was interfering with the students' construction of their learning experience. However, I have accepted this by reminding myself that agency needs scaffolding – something I have learned from some self-directed learning and project-based learning courses I facilitated in past years (see Hennessy & Lombardi in this issue). In addition, there were no negative mentions of the instructor's decisions in the feedback from the learners; on the contrary, the focus on back-channeling was especially appreciated.

Finally, reflecting on this course brings me joy and pride, which is the reason why I decided to narrate the story of this course at the LD30 conference. However, there were some traumatic aspects to this approach. One was the burden of preparing course materials for 90 minutes of class meeting time and ideally 90 minutes of homework time, twice a week, all without previous preparation and based on student decisions that sometimes are made in advance and sometimes the night before a class meeting. On a good day, it would take me two hours to prepare for one class meeting; on a bad day, up to three hours. This piles onto the 180 minutes of class time per week and circa 90~120 minutes of feedback on individual written and recorded learner reflections after each class. This course being only one of seven I taught in the spring semester probably starts to explain the toll it took. Yet, I never found myself questioning why I do this and whether it was worth the effort.

I do not wish for the above to discourage fellow language instructors, however. If your teaching happens in an environment that has the right conditions (in my opinion these would be a flexible curriculum and free choice of teaching materials, as well as a group of learners with intermediate or higher proficiency and in a number that you feel comfortable with giving individual weekly feedback), then I would strongly suggest you try and trust your students with the keys to your course (or start doing so in increments if a full-blown approach sounds too extreme). Facilitating this course was hard work, but the reward was witnessing my students bloom in front of my eyes as independent learners. They were happily speaking English in class and they were becoming more aware of their achievements. I still see more than half of them twice a week as they enrolled in an EFL discussion course I teach in the fall semester. They are confident and are not afraid to ask questions, comment on course activities, or request specific discussion topics. They still own it. *THIS keeps on happening.*

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Developing Research Skills: Engaging with Japanese Social Issues in an English Medium Seminar

ABSTRACT

In this paper we report on a project conducted in a semester-long introductory English-Medium Instruction seminar in 2023 that aims to cultivate research and analytical skills for students to both help prepare for their graduation theses and utilize in their lives beyond university. To provide background, we first contextualize the seminar. We then outline the previous project iteration, followed by the rationale for updating. We introduce four discrete strategies: building knowledge, comparing sources, identifying stakeholders, and developing an awareness of underlying issues in individual stories. To date, students have demonstrated they are able to recognize and potentially reconcile different viewpoints. However, identifying broader, overarching concepts that enable them to connect different stories in other contexts remains a challenge. We conclude by outlining suggestions for improvement, hoping to provide an example for other teachers aiming to develop student research skills in similar contexts.

Keywords: EMI, research skills, curriculum internationalization, pedagogy, Japan

The LD30 conference encouraged us to engage with students to enrich their lives and empower them to be active learners who can make a difference in the world. In this paper, we aim to help achieve this goal through presenting concrete research strategies utilized in a project conducted in a first and second year English-Medium Instruction seminar class. First, we provide context for both the project and class within which it takes place. We outline difficulties with past attempts to achieve similar goals, and then explain our rationale for the updated project on which we report here. We next provide our ideas for the revamped research project, followed by an interim report on student outcomes and conclude with concrete suggestions for both improvement and broader application by other teachers.

CONTEXT AND GOALS

The research project in this report was completed by first- and second-year students through two cycles in an introductory seminar class in 2023. Students take a total of four introductory seminars,

which are samplers for the 24-unit "courses" that are available to them in third and fourth year. Course, when used in this paper, will refer to this sense of the word. Our introductory seminar is for Course I, a course focused on Japan in international society; other courses are focused on language or literature. The course students choose determines their seminar and required electives for graduation. In addition to introducing the course, one of the main objectives of the class is to develop students' academic skills, including research skills, so that they are equipped to take Course I in their senior years.

In this project, we focus on developing foundational skills to find, compare, and utilize different information, which ideally enable students to become more media literate, more flexible to better understand different points of view, and more creative in approaching problem solving. Research skills at university contribute to their compulsory graduation thesis in fourth year. Strong research skills also provide students with essential skills for life beyond university through enabling them to "identify a problem, collect informational resources that can help address the problem, evaluate these resources for quality and relevance and come up with an effective solution to the problem" (St. Louis Community College Libraries, 2023).

At the outset, many students report a lack of familiarity with research, and have difficulty imagining research as a skill that applies practically to their lives. For example, many do not connect the process of planning a trip, which involves checking times, finding a place to stay, places to eat, and sites to visit to research skills that have crossover into the classroom. We therefore face both conceptual and practical challenges in developing research skills in our context.

HOW THE PROJECT HAS BEEN ORGANIZED IN PREVIOUS YEARS

Although students have completed a group research project each semester since we have been teaching this seminar, this year we changed the task to deepen students' understanding of research. Previously, we had given students a research assignment that investigated change in Japan. Students were tasked with researching a contemporary issue in Japan through a historical lens, examining the past and present situations and making predictions about the future based on their research. The objective was having students recognize that change in society is normal, and something to take charge of rather than to be feared or resisted without consideration. The goal of the project was worthwhile, and students often found the project interesting, with many making efforts to present their information well. However, we became dissatisfied with the project for a number of reasons, and from this year changed the approach.

THE RATIONALE FOR CHANGING

We decided to change the project primarily because it was not developing students' ability to think as researchers sufficiently. The content produced often demonstrated shallow understandings of the topics at hand. Rather than expanding the students' awareness, the project tended to reinforce students' propensity to see history as a linear narrative, with events relayed chronologically without a sense of causation. To illustrate, a typical example might be:

> '*School lunches originated in Yamagata in the Meiji era and then they became common in Japan, and it used to be common to have whale meat and bread. Now there is more variety of food and also now some local governments have problems because parents don't pay. In the future, there might be insects in school lunches because insects have a lot of protein.'*

Moreover, students did not recognize competing narratives or different perspectives about changes, nor did they recognize that history is a product of choices and not predestined. Projects commonly lacked broader themes and concepts, making it difficult to see meaningful connections between the past, present, and future, as well as between their topics and other changes in Japan or abroad.

Students' difficulties were partly a product of shortcomings in the design of the original project, which did not include explicit steps to ensure that students identified aspects of change and continuity, nor did it require students to address different perspectives. This made it difficult for students to overcome a kind of historical determinism or "naive realism" (The Decision Lab, n.d.), apparently not uncommon among contemporary university students.[1] Although the marking criteria included using a variety of different sources, the project instructions themselves did not require showing different or competing perspectives. As such, the use of different sources tended to be superficial rather than a way to broaden understanding of an issue. Description through examples tended to dominate at the expense of conceptual analysis of change. Additionally, the segmentation into past, present, and future commonly resulted in groups allocating one section to each member, resulting in students researching different aspects independently and an overall lack of cohesion.

Based on these experiences, we decided to overhaul the project entirely and set about reestablishing our goals, shifting from chronology to breadth of understanding. To help students visualize the expectations, we provided our own example with a presentation using a contemporary, controversial news topic. This modeled the final product for students, explicitly presenting the requirements. Students were also provided with a list of sentence frames that they could use for the presentation. These provided important scaffolding, as few students had created an English-language, research-oriented presentation before.

CHANGES IN FOCUS

We made five main changes from the original, outlined in the table below:

Previous project	Current project
Students conduct a chronological investigation in the change of an issue over time	Students identify a contemporary, controversial issue in the news and focus on a range of perspectives
Focus on past, present, future	Focus on identifying stakeholders and their different, competing, and overlapping perspectives
Requirement to use different sources, but no in-depth explanation or evaluation of the merits of sources	Long-term focus on developing the habit of using different sources, and different types of sources and explaining why they chose them
Chronological focus that does not require conceptual links between events	A clear focus on identifying the concepts and issues within a story
Loosely structured presentation with accompanying report.	Structured presentation with sentence frames provided

THE FOUR UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

In re-making the project, we wanted to foster skills that are applicable to a wide variety of situations and have students produce work that is more analytical and coherent. To achieve this, we decided that the project needed a more systematic approach by breaking research skills down into discrete parts, and introducing them incrementally over the semester. This approach is founded on four research principles.

The first principle is that knowledge is necessary to understand and think critically. Students are encouraged to read widely to build their knowledge. In the preparatory stage, students are introduced to the idea of different types of sources. This endeavor is supported by the university library, which provides student-oriented introductions to accessing books and online databases. At this stage, we also introduce the merits and demerits of social media, going to experts, and finding

1 Our thanks to Ken Ikeda for this insight.

the original source of information. Students research a news story from different types of sources to raise awareness of the way they can be used and their limitations. Noticing the differences between the ways news stories are told prepares them to question sources.

Having drawn attention to knowledge, the second principle is the importance of sourcing knowledge from different media in order to get different perspectives on the same issue. We provide examples with strong contrasts to highlight the importance of this. For example, we compare the Japanese and Korean government's respective websites about Takeshima/Dokdo. In a domestic example of differing views, students compare the front-page reports of the state funeral of former Prime Minister Abe from six Japanese newspapers. The broad spectrum of opinion helps students understand the dangers of relying on a single source and impresses the need to research from different sources and different types of sources and to interrogate the information they find. Furthermore, providing concrete examples of differences in perspective according to the media source helps students to understand why clearly referencing information is so important.

The third principle is issues having multiple stakeholders, and the idea of stakeholders having different perspectives on the same issue. Students can understand this through the hypothetical example of an easily imagined campus issue (i.e., potential sales of alcohol on campus). They can use their own experiences to imagine multiple perspectives on one issue and how different groups might have different concerns (i.e., those of students compared to staff compared to local neighborhood residents). Critically, the assignment requires students to look for stakeholders' common interests as well as their points of disagreement. This helps students move beyond entrenched opinions to a mindset where they can bridge differences, fostering a constructive mindset for problem solving in the face of conflict and opposing interests.

The final principle is focusing on identifying broader issues within a story. The ability to identify issues in their targeted news stories helps students apply what they are researching to other contexts in different times and places. As a requirement of the project, we have students identify the underlying issues in their story. Issues that they identify may include political concepts, such as globalization; sociocultural concepts, such as justice, gender, human rights; or environmental concepts, such as sustainability, pollution, global warming, etc. For example, a group of students researching the foreign trainee program in Japan may identify a concept such as labor rights, and connect it to sweatshop labor in Bangladesh, or human rights, through which they may identify similar issues in the treatment of foreign labor in the Middle East or Singapore. Students may also identify the issue of immigration and compare the situation of the trainees to those of other immigrant groups in Japan, such as foreign students. As trainee labor arises from combining the need to supplement a declining labor force with providing foreign aid, students may compare Japan's system to alternative foreign trainee labor schemes such as the one in South Korea, or alternative forms of development aid. Drawing out the issues to find comparable stories helps to train the students to think from a broader perspective and consider their topic more deeply and with greater connection to the international sphere. This stage is challenging, as students often lack knowledge of current affairs and are not accustomed to identifying broader issues, let alone doing so with a view to compare, and therefore still needs refining in design and implementation.

THE PROJECT

For the research project, students are split into small groups (2 or ideally 3 students per group) and choose a news story to investigate. The project is completed as a group in keeping with Course I objectives to create "a learning community that requires communication, cooperation, and collaboration" (Fujishima & Johnson, 2023, 139). Students have weekly tasks to develop their understanding of the news story, and present their research in the form of an oral presentation in week 14 or 15 of the semester.

Students are given a rubric to ensure the objectives of the project are clear. The rubric is split into two sections: content and presentation. For content, students are required to: (1) identify their topic and explain its importance, (2) identify multiple stakeholders, (3) identify different perspectives, (4) identify issues that can be connected to other stories, and (5) use different sources effectively. For presentation skills, students are required to (1) present information in an easy-to-understand way, (2) have good expression and delivery, (3) have good eye contact and engagement with the audience, and (4) have good preparation, fluency, and confidence overall. Importantly, we are judging on presentation skills and not on English ability (inasmuch as their presentation is understandable). The reason for not focusing on English is that this seminar is designated as a content class, specifically separate from language classes where language proficiency and acquisition are assessed.

OUTCOMES SO FAR

At present, we have only completed one semester with the new project and are in the process of doing it for a second time. Although the project design can still be improved, students are developing a better awareness of research skills than they did in previous iterations, based on the content of their presentations and student reflections.

All groups fulfilled the basic requirements of using a variety of different types of sources (for example, academic articles, mainstream media, social media, and official government websites). All groups also identified different stakeholders and their perspectives. Most groups were able to find and explain points of agreement and differences between stakeholders. One factor contributing to most students achieving these goals is that the project is highly structured. Because the rubric also serves as a checklist for tasks to do, students are more easily able to see whether they have addressed each requirement. Most groups were able to identify issues in order to make connections to other contexts. One group, for example, connected the issue of the coverup of Johnny Kitagawa's abuse of minors with the coverup of abuse in the Boy Scouts in the United States. Students verbally expressed surprise that it was not just a "Japan issue."

Having students able to shift from seeing a news report as just a "story" to being a story with perspectives to be understood and issues to be analyzed suggests evidence of progress. However, not all groups were able to make links effectively. Whether students will be able to apply this to future projects in seminar and elective classes within the course remains to be seen.

There has been no attempt yet to quantify student understanding using a questionnaire; however, students have been given project reflection cards which have open questions such as what they enjoyed, found difficult, and learned about researching through the project. Students' reflections show an understanding of the need to source information widely. For example, a first-year student commented:

> "*I have learned how to gather information from various sources rather than making decisions based on one article alone*" (Student A).

Students show an understanding of the fact that different people have different points of view, and that consciously considering issues from the perspective of various stakeholders is something they will be able to apply to future projects (and hopefully life):

> "*I have never thought about anything from the perspective of a stakeholder or that person until now. This time, I was able to think about stakeholders and research them and learn research topics with various opinions that I couldn't think of myself, and I learned that there is also this way of research*" (Student B).

At the same time, the reflections also contained comments that showed these strategies were unfamiliar and challenging for some students: "*I struggled to get information from various sources*." (Student C).

In addition to comments about the research aspects of the presentation, students, particularly first years, wrote in their reflection cards that they were nervous and lacked confidence to present in English.

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS & BROADER APPLICABILITY

We have four main ideas for how to improve in the future. First, spend more time on the project throughout the semester. If we can rewrite the class materials to integrate the research strategies of knowledge, sources, stakeholders, and issues more explicitly inside the core class materials rather than as a separate research project, it would reduce cognitive load and allow more time for students to expand their thinking through research.

Second, we could add a questioning component into the project.[2] Good research relies on good questions. Integrating questioning into the project more explicitly is likely to help students' overall understanding of the purpose of research and develop their curiosity. Brainstorming questions about their news story is also likely to deepen engagement with the project.

Third, we could highlight the transferable skills students develop through the research project. Greater understanding of the relevance of the task would hopefully lead to increased student motivation (c.f. Frymier & Shulman 1995) and also help them recognize that they can use the skills in other contexts.

Finally, we need to consider alternative ways of scaffolding to enable students to gain a deeper understanding of what they are doing, decrease cognitive load, and shift focus towards skill development. With more scaffolding, students can potentially focus on developing skills rather than spending time worrying about how to present, which can be a barrier for learning as noted above.

Overall, this project, which introduced research skills incrementally, has improved students' ability to approach research, take account of a wider range of sources, and develop a consciousness to look from various perspectives, all abilities needed not only in academic contexts but also in life more generally. Although this paper is a case study of an EMI seminar, educators working to cultivate similar skills may benefit from engaging in these incremental, concrete-foundation approaches irrespective of teaching language.

The LD30 conference theme urged us to action by making a difference for the future. The theme echoes a growing international awareness that education needs to evolve so that it prepares students to be able to contribute to a rapidly changing world and solve global problems (OECD, 2020). In light of this, it is our hope that students will be taught to interrogate complex social issues from various viewpoints and develop a habit of questioning and looking for more information to be better equipped to meet the needs of society. The wide variety of projects shared at LD30 both by educators and students reaffirmed the importance of coming together to innovate and exchange ideas. We hope that the project outlined here can be a helpful step to understanding and solving problems based on a strong foundation of respect, understanding, and a will to improve.

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Tangible Benefits From Intangible Practices

ABSTRACT

This paper shows how it is possible to help students engage with the topic of intangible cultural practices in EFL classrooms in Japan, and asserts that the students attained tangible benefits from doing so. It explains why the topic of intangible cultural practices was used and how the teacher proceeded by providing examples of the activities and giving explanations of how they were implemented. Tangible benefits were obtained from a two-class focus on three intangible cultural practices that were candidates for inscription in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The benefits include consciousness-raising by broadening students' horizons, furthering cross-cultural understanding, and encouraging solidarity. They also include linguistic benefits such as providing students with the opportunity to develop their vocabulary, use new knowledge in classroom discussions and speeches, and, finally, by applying critical thinking skills to choose one of three cultural practices to support.

Keywords: CLIL, UNESCO, EFL, critical thinking

This short article looks at the ways in which learners attained tangible benefits – consciousness-raising gains, opportunities to use new vocabulary, and the use of critical thinking skills – from a series of classroom activities that focused on three intangible cultural practices that were candidates for inscription in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Since the classes were taught in July 2023, their candidacy has been decided and all three, i.e. transhumance farming, traditional glass making, and jamu wellness culture (UNESCO, 2023:1,2,3), have been inscribed into UNESCO's lists. They were regarded as appropriate topics to use for students taking courses on UN-related issues at two universities: a group of EFL students from a College of Law faculty in Tokyo, and EFL students from a Foreign Studies faculty in Chiba, Japan.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL PRACTICES

While UNESCO World Heritage Sites are well-known to most students today, UNESCO's 'intangible cultural practices' are not. A somewhat unwieldy definition for them is "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage" (UNESCO, 2003). If presented in manageable ways in the classroom, they can be used to raise awareness of 'practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills' hitherto unknown to students, and deepen understanding of activities whose importance are understated and by their very nature are often unseen and unheard. They can do this while increasing and deepening their vocabulary knowledge, applying and working on their public

speaking skills, and using discussion skills while comparing and contrasting the virtues of specific cultural practices. My intention was that students would use four- skills activities to develop an awareness of being a global citizen and to promote alternative cultural practices to the ones that are found in commercial media - and to do this all in English.

THREE NOMINEES FROM A CHOICE OF FORTY-FIVE

I therefore decided to teach students about three of the forty-five nominations for inclusion from the 2023 Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (ICH1), the results of which were announced at the 8th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Kasane, the Republic of Botswana, in December 2023. The three I chose are shown in Table 1. They represent separate areas that hold potential interest for students, and are all topics that lend themselves to discussions and speeches. Doing speeches would help students develop public speaking skills; preparing reasons for why they would choose one practice over another would enhance critical thinking skills; and through doing this they would develop a feeling that they know more about diverse cultural practices.

Table 1: Three practices I chose for class (and their real-world nominators)*

	Intangible Practice	Countries that nominated the practice
1	Transhumance (seasonal droving of livestock)	Albania - Andorra - Austria - Croatia - France - Greece - Italy - Luxembourg - Romania – Spain
2	Handmade glass production	Czech Republic - Finland - France - Germany - Hungary - Spain
3	Jamu wellness culture	Indonesia

*A country which has signed the World Heritage Convention can be a nominator. Nominations are submitted to the World Heritage Centre for evaluation.

WHY WERE THEY CHOSEN?

Transhumance, glass production, and wellness culture were chosen because they provided students with three different practices – covering agriculture, manufacturing and health. *Transhumant practices* were considered worthy of inclusion because these practices have existed for many centuries in multiple cultures (not just those in the nominators' territories) and may even be used to promote sustainable development goals (e.g. SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production). *Handmade glass production* was chosen because it is a cultural practice that, as with transhumant practices, was not expected to be known by students, but is a skill that requires artistry and teamwork within communities and produces products of beauty. Finally, *jamu wellness culture* allowed for recognition of the widespread use of traditional natural medicines made from herbs and spices which, in this case, is specific to Indonesia, but which reflects skills, values, and practices found all over the world.

THE LD30 PRESENTATION

The people who attended my presentation at the LD30 Conference were curious about how these practices could be introduced and taught in a manner so that students could attain tangible benefits. Dexter da Silva commented that finding ways to use such topics is worthwhile in environments where tangible targets for students (perhaps, overly) concern the highly important but primarily work-oriented aim of raising a TOEIC score or some other measurable language learning target.

The courses in which these lessons were taught were innovative (within their contexts) in that they were designed around groups of EFL students representing a UN Member State (of their choice) and doing research around themes in preparation for discussions and speeches. By the time students were taught the classes on intangible practices, they had represented a single UN Member State for most of the semester and had researched contemporary UN-related issues to

prepare for discussions and speeches on the issues. One of the attendees at my presentation asked me how, in this context, it would be possible to show tangible benefits. Although I could, of course, see and hear students discussing and presenting issues *within* class time, the students got into the practice of sending work before (preparation notes) and after class (written reflections) onto a Google Classroom page. The practice was followed throughout the course and this is how I was able to track their progress and evaluate them.

In the presentation, I discussed three questions that concerned the classes on intangible practices. They were taught at two different universities in the same way. The questions were:

1. How did students prepare before class?
2. What activities did they do in class? and
3. What did they produce?

HOW DID STUDENTS PREPARE BEFORE CLASS?

As with previous topics, students prepared by reading and answering questions from a two-page set of information and doing video activities on the three intangible practices which were made available on Google Classroom (see Table 2 and Figure 1). They knew that proper use of the worksheets would prepare them for class. This expectation was common to both courses: students were given information to read and questions to complete before the following week's class.

Table 2: Content of homework given in preparation for class

Page	Activity / Content
1	Reading: (i) What are Intangible Cultural Practices? (ii) Criteria for inscription into the UNESCO list. (iii) The 3 practices
2	Reading on *Transhumance* farming + link to YouTube video (Preschitz, 2019) with questions
3	Reading on *Handmade Glass Production* + link to YouTube video (Science Channel, 2017) with questions
4	Reading on *Jamu Wellness Culture* + link to YouTube video (OGS, 2017) with questions

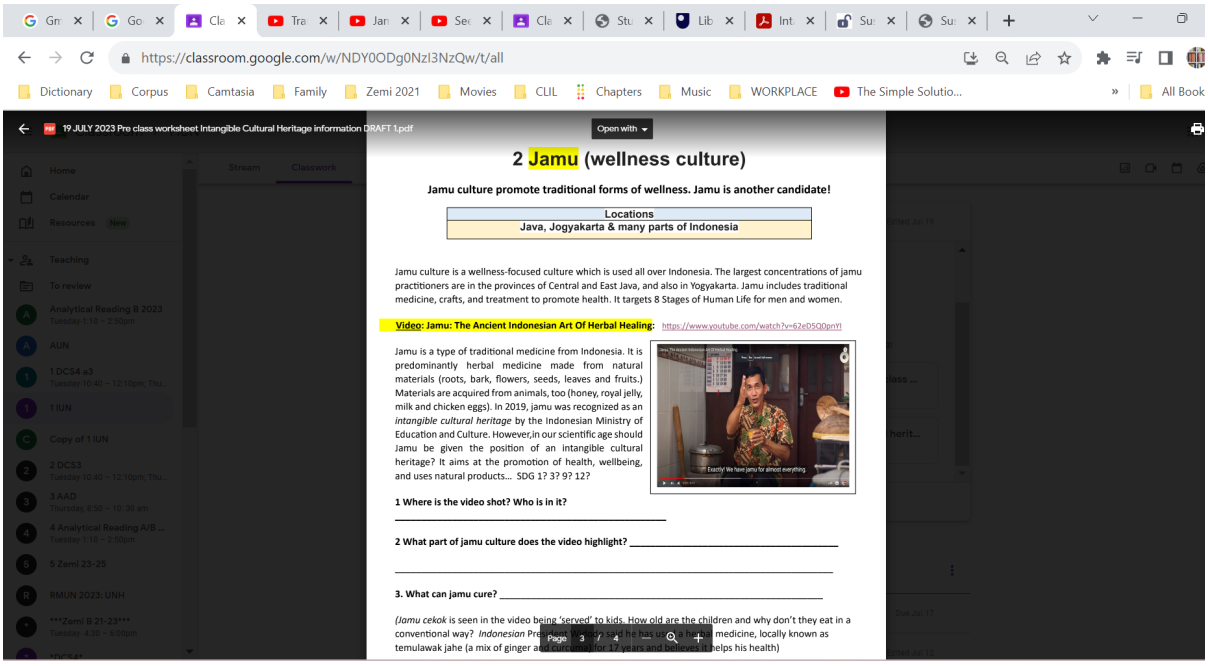

Figure 1: Example page

WHAT ACTIVITIES DID THEY DO IN THE CLASSES ON INTANGIBLE PRACTICES?

Lesson one

The lessons on intangible practices covered two lessons. At the end of the first lesson, I introduced the new topic about Intangible Cultural Practices. The students sat in UN Member States groups (some of which were nominees of the three intangible practices) while I explained the difference between World Heritage Sites (which can be perceived tangibly) and Intangible Cultural Practices (which are, by name, intangible!) using a PowerPoint. This lent itself to a discussion about Japanese sites and practices that students were knowledgeable about. Students were then requested to look for sites and practices from the country they represented. They were then put into groups and discussed what they had found. Soon after, the students were informed of their homework which was made accessible on Google Classroom towards the end of class. As usual, I told students that completion of the homework would prepare them well for the output-based activities in the next class and also in writing their reflections on the topic.

Lesson two

In lesson two, students were reminded of what we did in lesson one, and then were informed that we would watch video clips of three intangible cultural practices. If they had done their homework, they would have been able to discuss the merits and demerits of the practices (with other UN Member States). Students were reminded to focus on the questions in the worksheets and to consider which practice their country would prefer to become a UNESCO cultural heritage practice. They were then encouraged to speak to other groups (countries) and share ideas.

After the discussion, we moved towards the next stage: producing short group presentations to outline the reasons for their choices. This was often a culminating activity in the class. I reminded students that giving a speech was something they could write about in their reflection homework, and as a consequence most students clamoured to volunteer. In the classes on intangible practices, to speed up proceedings and to assist the less confident, I used one slide to highlight (and remind students about) connections between cultural practices and specific SDG goals (see Table 3a); and another to provide sets of phrases and hints to help the less confident compose a speech (see Table 3b).

Table 3a: Connections between cultural practices and specific SDG goals

Intangible Practices	Relevance to SDGs
Transhumance farming	Zero hunger (SDG 2), Good health and well-being (SDG 3), Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), Climate action (SDG 13), Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), Life on land (SDG 15), Partnerships for the goals (SDG 17).
Handmade Glass Production	Quality education (SDG 4), Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), Industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).
Jamu Wellness Culture	Good health and well-being (SDG 3), Gender equality (SDG 5), Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), Life on land (SDG 15).

Table 3b: Language support for speech preparation

Structures used to help students make speeches in class time
- Today, we must choose a Cultural Practice to be inscribed as _____
- (Country name) supports _____ because _____
- All of the practices are important because _____
- However, we support _____. We have __ reasons: _____
- Thank you for listening.

By the time this class was taught, students willingly gave speeches: they did not have to be forced to compose a speech (although the less confident were respectfully coaxed and supported). The success of their speeches relied upon understanding the content they covered for homework, on developing a position with reference to the country they represented, and on participating actively in class. Happily, the majority of students completed the homework and were able to give well-researched speeches.

In previous classes in the course, we had discussed other topics and voted (as UN Member States) on whether we agreed or disagreed with ideas that were raised. In the case of the class on intangible practices, as chance would have it, there were roughly equal amounts of support for each intangible practice. This was clear in viewing the class-time speeches and checking the post-class reflections. In this class, I also confirmed this through an end-of-class vote on which practice should be accepted.

WHAT DID THEY PRODUCE?

In the reflections for this class, students gave support and reflections for all three intangible practices. Below, I provide an example for each one, explain why I included them, and highlight what I think is significant. These significant cases highlight tangible benefits from the class, which fall in the realm of consciousness-raising, vocabulary development, and critical thinking.

Transhumance

In this example, the student expresses an awareness that cultural heritage 'products' are in danger of extinction. This shows the results of the topic alone acting to raise her consciousness. On behalf of Mexico, she selected the practice of transhumance and, in her reflection, explains that she has also independently researched Mayan heritage sites. Expanding her interest and deepening awareness of a culture is a benefit, and she goes on to express great interest in such sites and of indigenous cultures in South America. Going beyond what was requested, she goes on to explain that transhumant culture has been practised in Mexico - something not referenced in the worksheet. She also refers to sustainability, to animal rights, and to veganism - the latter of which is practised in some transhumant communities.

Student writing 1

> *In July 19th class, I learned about Intangible Cultural Heritage. I have things that I learned from this class. Firstly, we searched for tangible and intangible heritage in my country; Mexico. I've never experienced that there are many tangible heritage sites that represent Mayans' culture. Particularly, I'd like to visit Teotihuacan and Guanajuato. These two places are amazing pyramids, buildings and scenery. I definitely feel an emotional and historical vibe from even seeing the pictures. Also, I got interested in Mayan culture.*

> *Secondly, we searched what Mexico has intangible cultural heritages. I learned that Mexico has a precious culture about glass production. It was a beautiful production. ... the process is simple but difficult and needs huge power to produce. However, if I had a chance to create it, I'd like to try to make it. Beside that, I learned many intangible cultural heritage products are exposed to extinction. It's an urgent issue because these cultural things represent their own culture and play an important role in their life. However, it's the same situation in Japan. We have to consider this problem seriously. Finally, we made a speech by ourselves:*
>
> *Mexico thinks that we have to prioritize and protect transhumance. I have some reasons. First, food is important and essential for our life. We can't hand down other cultural heritage unless we can't eat something. It's kind of like " An army marches on its stomach". Aside from that, we have to keep it sustainable and consider animal rights issues for our future. Nowadays animal rights issues are becoming urgent at the same time, people are getting interested in veganism. For these reasons, Mexico thinks that transhumance is significant so we'd like to prioritize this tradition.*

Glass Production

In this example, the student gives a comment on all three intangible practices. As requested, she did not choose a practice backed by the country she represented, Italy. Her choice of glass production was chosen because of Italy's famous stained-glass windows in churches. She uses vocabulary from the worksheet - language that students would not be expected to use (eg: droving, blown glass). In referring to jamu wellness culture she shows understanding of its purported benefits and uses vocabulary we would not normally expect (eg: indigestion). Her comments on transhumance reveal a modern mindset which values convenience over culture (transhumance farming is "hard work" and "we should come up with an easier way"), but she does so using content-specific language (pastoral, nomadic, droving).

Like the previous student, she wrote about learning many new things and refers to the fact that she (or a member of her team) gave a speech from Italy's perspective, and for which her group had to use critical thinking skills to deliver a judgment.

Student writing 2

> *In July 19 class, I represented Italy. We looked at intangible cultural heritages. In this class, we watched three videos.*
>
> *First, we learned about Handmade Glass Production. Traditional handmade glass production consists of the shaping and decorating of cold and hot glass. I first learned that the glass is blown, (using) flamework, and cold (work) to work (it) to perfection. Glass is fragile and difficult to make ....*
>
> *Second, we learned about Jamu. Jamu is a type of traditional medicine from Indonesia, and Jamu can cure pain and indigestion headaches. I was surprised when I first learned about this culture. I thought that this culture could help many people suffering from illness.*
>
> *Third, we learned about transhumance. Transhumance is the seasonal droving of livestock and occurs within and between countries. It is a type of pastoral or nomadic farming that is based around seasonal movements of livestock between fixed summer and winter pastures. I was surprised because the farmers do this twice a year by foot, and horse. This is a lot of work, so I thought we should come up with an easier way.*

After that, we gave a speech. Italy talked about glass production. Italians believe in Christianity and there are many churches in Italy. That's why stained glass, which is often used in churches in Italy, is important. We thought we should continue and (save) this culture. I know a lot about cultural heritage. However, there were many things I didn't know about intangible cultural heritage, so I'm glad I was able to learn about them. I think cultural heritage buildings and technology are wonderful, so I think it is necessary to prevent them from disappearing as much as possible.

Jamu Wellness Culture

The final example is shorter than the other two, and also has a different style. It highlights the development of critical thinking because the writer not only reveals an understanding of the difference between tangible and intangible heritage, he considers the choices of another country, Australia - and understands why they chose transhumant farming. Opting not to comment on glass production, the writer (representing India) explains why his country 'especially' supports Jamu Wellness culture. He is willing to acknowledge another opinion and gives a reason for doing so: namely, the need for 'self-sufficient' cultures in this age of climate change.

Student writing 3

We learned about Cultural Heritage. Cultural Heritage has two things. It is tangible (such as buildings and landscapes) and intangible (folklore, art, language, and work practices). We learned about three intangible cultural heritage: Handmade Glass Production, Jamu and Transhumance.

India thinks we need all of them, however, especially, we need support for Jamu, because India has a lot of infections. Australia supported transhumance, because climate change may cause food shortages to become a problem in the world in the future, and this kind of self-sufficient culture will become important. But rising temperatures have reduced the amount of grass available for grazing, putting the nomads' livelihoods at risk.

Finally, transhumance helps regions and people to conserve a local identity in an ever increasingly globalized Earth. Not only are there tangible reasons to keep this tradition alive, there is also a great potential for cultural, ecological, and educational purposes, creating interest and increasing awareness.

CONCLUSION

The activities on intangible practices came at the end of a course in which we looked at issues currently in discussion at the UN (or in UN bodies such as UNICEF). In my position as a faculty adviser to groups of students interested in topics at the UN, I have developed a lot of knowledge that I could use to help support the students. Transmitting such knowledge is easier said than done, but I found that I could teach engaging classes that resulted in students attaining and producing tangible benefits. There are written attestations that consciousnesses had been changed and that new vocabulary was being used in output-based activities such as speeches and writing reflections. That this was done with a focus on something intangible pleases me!

If I decide to use this topic again, I can choose some of the topics which are being treated for the 2024 cycle of inscription into intangible heritage lists - which include nominations for an Urgent Safeguarding List or the Representative List, and proposals for the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (ICH 2). At the time of writing there are sixty-seven files to consider. A cursory glance shows there are practices from every continent and include artistic practices, food and drink, and

rituals (three areas I may look into). With the experience of teaching about three intangible benefits in 2023, I feel sure I can construct a meaningful study unit around three new ones. I believe that students should learn about authentic practices that are not visible to the majority of the population, and which have high importance if we are to preserve non-commercial practices with roots in a previous age.

As this paper has shown, difficult topics such as intangible cultural practices can be used in class with sets of activities that are written for specific groups of students. They can lead to positive language learning outcomes. Crucial to its success is making sure that students read about the practices before class. Being primed for the topics through readings, video links, and questions, the students were ready and able to participate in output-based activities such as discussions and public speaking. Key to its success was using tailored material to suit the level of the students and activities that target four skills.

At the end of my LD30 presentation I asked attendees on ways to attain tangible benefits when teaching such a topic. Dexter da Silva helpfully mentioned John Hattie's 'Visible Learning for Teachers' (2012) and after reading the book I believe that I was following some of his good practices such as having high expectations (p.81), focusing on the effect of teaching rather than the method (p.83), and being an activator and evaluator of learning (p.86). Hattie states that visible teaching and learning "occurs when learning is the explicit and transparent goal, when it is appropriately challenging, and when the teacher and the student both (in their various ways) seek to ascertain whether and to what degree the challenging goal is attained" (p.14). I think I achieved that in the activities discussed above - and I have tangible proof. However, further readings of Hattie's book may help me maximise future tangible benefits while teaching this topic – and others.

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English Beyond Textbooks: Using Apps to Increase Vocabulary and Overall Proficiency

ABSTRACT

On entering university, most Japanese students have had approximately 1,000 hours of exposure to English, a good way short of the 2,500 hours that are thought to be necessary for reaching high proficiency (Inagaki, 2010). Unfortunately, at the university where I work, many students struggle with English, holding TOEIC scores below 400 and vocabulary proficiency at the 300-frequency level of the National General Service List (NGSL). This highlights the need for them to learn a considerable number of words to improve their English fluency. Relying solely on classroom textbooks does not provide enough vocabulary support, as vocabulary should be encountered multiple times. As a result, students often do not retain the phrases after their unit tests. Moreover, students at this university often lack the motivation to study outside of class. To address these challenges, language learning apps which offer timed spaced repetition were introduced. These apps enhance word retention and may function as motivational tools to continue learning. These apps also empower students by demonstrating their ability to reach goals independently.

Keywords: learner autonomy, vocabulary acquisition, language-learning apps

Over the past six years, I have taught mandatory freshman English courses across five universities, where I have observed notable variations in English proficiency among students. One recurrent challenge has been the students' lack of vocabulary, which has affected their language proficiency. In the past academic year, I conducted an assessment at Nihon University of vocabulary levels using the Vocabulary Levels test created by Raine and McLean (2019). This involved administering the National General Service List (NGSL) flemma test for productive typing form recall in Spring 2023 and a parallel evaluation for receptive reading recall in Fall 2023. For the productive recall test, students see a sentence with one word in Japanese (e.g., He is an 面白い student). The student would then have to type in the word "interesting". For the receptive recall test, students see a sentence that is completely in English with one word underlined. Students have to type in the Japanese translation of the word while paying attention to grammar. For example, students may see the sentence "This is a free pen." The student would have to type「無料の」in the text box.

The initial evaluation resulted in an average placement within the first 500 words of the NGSL, prompting a reconsideration of my teaching strategies, as the level of vocabulary knowledge was lower than expected. The majority of the Spring semester classes centered around textbook use, with the addition of Quizlet study sets, and in-class gaming activities. Based on the results of the vocabulary tests and classroom observations, in the Fall 2023 semester, I changed my approach

dedicating entire class sessions to playing instructional games such as Bamboozle, Quizlet Live, Wordwall, and tailored board games crafted from the material covered in the textbook. Noticing occasional gaps in students' ability to recall phrases and words from the textbook during games, I introduced educational apps as a supplementary measure, aiming to diversify learning experiences while retaining a connection to traditional methodologies (e.g., relying solely on textbooks or students only reading aloud from textbooks in the class).

Subsequently, for the Fall 2023 evaluation, I decided to shift the emphasis towards meaning recall - where students could identify the meaning of the words shown. This decision stemmed from a dual curiosity: firstly, whether there would be a change in scores (i.e., the meaning recall test would be easier for students), and secondly, an exploration of the impact of prevalent instructional tools such as Quizlet, which primarily facilitate meaning recall through flashcard-based study. I begin with a discussion about the difficulty of becoming proficient in English, followed by an account of my attempts to build students' vocabulary, and their attitudes to those methods.

DIFFICULTY OF BECOMING PROFICIENT IN ENGLISH FOR JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

The predominant instructional focus of English at school often revolves around exam-oriented teaching. This led me to wonder why my students tested into the vocabulary level bands that they did on both the meaning recall and productive recall tests and how what they learned aligned with established vocabulary lists such as the NGSL as it is a frequency-based vocabulary list. If students had mastered the most frequent words of English, their vocabulary levels should be higher. I also started to wonder how much time students would need to increase their overall proficiency. Inagaki (2005) posits an estimated requirement of 2,500 study hours for attaining a high level of English proficiency for Japanese students, with a range of 2,500 to 7,500 hours to achieve a native-like level. Consequently, cultivating self-directed learning habits and enhancing intrinsic motivation becomes crucial if learners wish to become proficient. Initial surveys conducted in class at the beginning of the semester indicated that students lack the motivation to study English outside of class, contrasting with a higher motivation to participate in class activities, which is possibly influenced by grade considerations.

I then began to wonder what sort of materials could be used to inspire students to study more outside of the classroom. While textbooks serve as valuable study resources, they do not offer enough chances for students to recall the meaning of the words that they have encountered. When I used Fifty-fifty Book One, I noticed that although there were some review units, there needed to be more recycling of vocabulary. For example, "uncle" appears two times after its initial introduction in Unit 9. However, some of my students had trouble remembering what uncle meant. Recent efforts by Browne et al. (2023), evident in their textbook "Fast Forward to Fluency", based on the NGSL, strive to address this issue by incorporating a recycling approach to reinforce vocabulary retention. However, textbooks fail to provide students with motivation to study English more outside of class, as I am quite doubtful that any of my students would refer to their textbooks after the class has finished. This thought is supported by students doing their homework before class or writing down their classmates' answers to the self-study sections of their textbook when they feel that I am not looking.

Additionally, I did not think that their vocabulary levels had improved as a result of the methods I had used, which was mostly using textbooks and playing some games such as Bamboozle on occasion as well as using Quizlet during the semester. This is because in some games that were played in class, students were not able to use the vocabulary correctly. For example, in class I play a modified version of tic-tac-toe, where students can only put an X or an O if they can make a sentence with the word in the square. Many students asked me what the words meant even though these words were part of their Quizlet study sets.

Therefore, it was clear that my methods were not very effective in helping students retain vocabulary which makes them more proficient speakers. Thus, I thought it was necessary to think beyond only using the textbook and my methods to expand students' vocabulary knowledge. As students often use their phones, I decided to introduce apps as they might get students to practice English outside of class more effectively to increase their overall vocabulary levels.

EFFECTIVENESS OF APPS FOR VOCABULARY BUILDING

Webb and Nation (2017) stated that spaced-time repetition, presenting words in both isolation and context, and fostering a sense of deliberate learning, contribute significantly to vocabulary acquisition. Apps possess these features, which may be why researchers have found success in increasing learners' language proficiency. Ahmed et al. (2022) reported increased vocabulary and grammar development among students using Duolingo, concurrently noting a positive impact on motivation and reducing learners' anxiety. Similarly, Nuralisah and Kareviati (2020) observed success with Memrise in enhancing students' mastery of vocabulary. The comprehensive study by Alvarado et al. (2016) further affirmed the efficacy of apps in addressing all language skills while providing a practical and engaging rehearsal environment.

Apps also offer motivational incentives such as badges and level progression, framing language learning as a gamified experience. This gamification aspect not only enhances motivation but can also transform perceived "dead time", such as commuting, into productive learning opportunities. The timed space repetition embedded in these apps aids in recall, and the autonomy they afford to students helps to compensate for limited class time.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TO THE APPS

In the Fall semester, students were introduced to different apps twice. In lesson 5 students were shown how to use four popular apps Memrise, LingoClip, Duolingo, and Busuu. These apps were chosen as they are free, easily accessible, and familiar to me. I chose apps I have used before in case troubleshooting was needed. I demonstrated how to play the 4 apps in front of the class. I also talked about how to create accounts and where to download the apps. Students were then placed into groups where they chose an app to try and help each other if they were having any problems. Students used the apps for 20 minutes or less and were then given a survey. The students who chose Duolingo played for a shorter time because Duolingo relies on students keeping enough hearts to continue playing. In the survey, Memrise and Duolingo were the top picks among the majority of students. Those who opted for Memrise tended to recommend it to their peers and used it for longer than those who chose Duolingo. This divergence in usage patterns might be attributed to Duolingo's heart system, where users need to either purchase more hearts or wait for their "health" to recover once depleted, leading to some students not recommending the app. Feedback from students revealed that Busuu, Duolingo, and Memrise often begin at a level considered too easy for some, prompting a desire to test out of the initial levels. Additionally, some students preferred sticking to a single app due to concerns about storage space on their phones. However, the overall sentiment towards the apps remained positive.

In Lesson 14, students were introduced to four additional apps: Innovative Language Learning, BBC Learning English, Poe-Fast AI Chat, and AWABE. These selections were made based on their accessibility and cost-free nature. Notably, BBC English and Poe offer the advantage of starting at more challenging proficiency levels. Students were also given the option to continue using the four apps introduced earlier: LingoClip, Memrise, Duolingo, and Busuu. Following a demonstration on app usage, students were instructed to use the app for 10 minutes and subsequently complete a survey. Among the choices, 5 students opted for Busuu but stated that they did not like it, indicating they would not recommend it to their peers. Two students chose LingoClip but they did not like it. This outcome was somewhat unexpected, considering students can choose to listen to songs

they enjoy; however, students did not seem to use earphones which might have influenced their experience. On the contrary, 4 students selected Memrise and expressed satisfaction, recommending it to their classmates. A lone student chose BBC English but did not enjoy it and would not recommend it. Duolingo was the preferred choice for 7 students, with the majority enjoying it and endorsing it to their peers, although some perceived it as too easy. One student faced constraints in loading any apps due to insufficient phone space.

In the Lesson 14 survey, students were also questioned about their continued app usage since Lesson 5. Of the 20 surveyed students, only 3 reported continued use of the app. These students favored Duolingo, engaging with it approximately twice a week. Their motivation for studying outside of class was reported as somewhat moderate, aligning with the broader trend among students who expressed being only moderately motivated or lacking motivation for English study beyond class hours.

CONCLUSION

While textbooks play a pivotal role in establishing a foundational understanding for learners striving for English proficiency, relying solely on textbooks proves inadequate for vocabulary acquisition. Textbooks are usually used by instructors during class sessions, which fall short of providing students with a sufficient time frame to cultivate English proficiency. Consequently, students must actively seek motivation to learn outside of the classroom, to compensate for the time constraints of in-class instruction.

Therefore, educational apps may be a solution to help with the time deficit and might be able to help increase proficiency. Moreover, these apps contribute to enhanced retention through the implementation of time-spaced learning strategies. However, if students are going to remain motivated enough to use them, they need to be part of a student's grade as this survey shows that most students are not very motivated to study English outside of class.

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Foreign Language Anxiety in the English Classroom: Towards a Deeper Understanding

ABSTRACT

Classrooms can be an anxiety-inducing environment for any student, but a number of students suffer from anxiety specific to language classrooms. The Horwitz Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale may be used to identify the existence of this specific type of anxiety in language classrooms (Horwitz, E., Horwitz, M., & Cope, J. 1986). I administered a Japanese translation of the questionnaire to 95 university students of which 85 provided valid answers. The answers identified that there may be a problem with anxiety in my classrooms. This article serves as a reflection on my presentation at the LD30 conference in October 2023 in which I discussed the concept of foreign language anxiety, showed selected results of my survey, and offered some possible solutions to identifying anxiety in the language classroom and ways in which teachers can adapt their lessons to be more inclusive of the most anxious students.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, learner development, teacher development, action research

Anxiety in the language classroom seems to be an ever-present problem no matter the level of institution I work at. Learners who are just beginning their studies in English may be anxious about speaking in front of their peers for fear of embarrassment or ridicule. It might be easy to assume then that motivated learners who show great success in language learning may not suffer from anxiety in the same way. However, from my experience teaching intermediate and advanced learners, as the demands of the language classroom increase, the fear of embarrassment or ridicule may also increase, as these students may feel they have more to lose. Having said this, some of my most energetic and motivated students have been streamed into the lowest class of their institution, yet still they openly profess to enjoy English. This paradox has puzzled me for a long time and was the reason I chose to focus on anxiety among language learners towards the end of my postgraduate studies and, indeed, for the presentation that I did at the LD30 Conference at Gakushuin University in October 2023. My experience at the conference in some ways mirrors my research. No matter how many times I present at a conference, I find that there are still some anxious feelings before every presentation. In this reflection piece, I will first introduce foreign language classroom anxiety and Horwitz's foreign language classroom anxiety scale. I will then give a brief summary of the results of the foreign language classroom anxiety scale that I administered to 95 of my students followed by a discussion of the problems that my students appeared to have. I will offer some suggestions on how to alleviate anxiety in the language classroom and end with my conclusions.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY

When the audience members began to enter the room for my LD30 presentation, I felt anxious at the thought of making a mistake or not being able to convey my thoughts correctly. This fear of embarrassment or ridicule seems similar to what my students may feel in the classroom, but the premise of my research is that there is an anxiety that is unique to or exacerbated by the foreign language classroom. I began the presentation by introducing the concept of foreign language classroom anxiety. Foreign language classroom anxiety was defined by Horwitz (1986) as a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning." From this definition, we can already see that anxiety is a complex emotion, which may be exacerbated by many factors unique to language classrooms. In practice, I have found (and I am sure that you have too) that many students stall when it comes to producing language in English classes, especially when it involves being in front of other people. For this reason, Horwitz (1986), in the same article that she defined foreign language classroom anxiety, created a corresponding scale, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, of 33 likert questions to determine whether a learner was suffering from an anxiety brought on by the language classroom itself. The test was designed to measure the effect of three factors: test anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation. For the sake of brevity, I can say that test anxiety did not seem to present a major problem for my students, so I was only concerned with communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation for this presentation.

DISPLAYS OF ANXIETY IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

I continued the presentation by introducing how anxiety may be observed. There are certain ways that anxiety displays in the classroom that may not be obvious at first glance. Gregerson (2005) identified behaviours in anxious students such as nervous gestures, twiddling thumbs, and self touching. These could be considered to be signs of anxiety because they are unrelated to and therefore do not enhance communication. Facial expressions may also give clues as to the anxious state of students. Students avoiding eye contact and focussing their attention elsewhere might be doing so to avoid the "threat" of a teacher's persistent questioning. What seems to be apparent is that students who are making nervous gestures or avoiding eye contact may in fact be succumbing to a sort of negative arousal to cope with an unpleasant anxious feeling. Initially, teachers may feel that students who play with their phones are being rude, but when considered under the concept of negative arousal it might be easy to see how they could be showing signs of anxiety. Mobile phones are quite useful for an anxious student as they give them somewhere to focus their eyes (avoiding eye contact) and something for them to distract their hands (something to touch). For some students, this could be a coping mechanism to distract from negative or anxious thoughts and feelings. In my classes, I have observed some students who show these behaviours, so I decided to administer the foreign language classroom anxiety scale to identify any possible anxiety.

WHAT I FOUND OUT

I administered a Japanese translation of the Horwitz Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale to 95 of my students at two universities in Saitama and Chiba in April 2023. I administered the survey online using a Google form and I received 85 valid responses. The students are considered to be beginner level by both institutions, with most having a TOEIC score under 300. Nine students refused to do the survey, and one result was invalid. From the 33 questions on the FLCAS I chose to look more closely at three questions for this presentation: Q7, Q11, and Q30. These questions received the strongest response of the results and give clear insights into the students anxieties linked to distorted appraisals. The results for these questions can be seen in Table 1. A response of one suggests a strong agreement, and a response of five suggests a strong disagreement with the statements in the questions.

Table 1: Selected results from my implementation of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (based on Horwitz et al. 1986)

	Q7	Q11	Q30
Mode	1.000	5.000	1.000
Median	2.000	4.000	2.000
Mean	2.200	4.071	2.083
Std. Deviation	1.223	1.033	1.164

Key:
Q7. I keep thinking that other students are better at English than I am.
Q11. I don't understand why some people get so upset about English class.
Q30. I am overwhelmed by the number of grammar rules you have to learn to speak English.

A short summary of the results suggests that there was an overall anxious feeling among a majority of students, with a subgroup of particularly anxious students. Further analysis of the results may offer some interesting insights. In response to question seven, "I keep thinking that other students are better at English than I am," students responded quite strongly with an average response of two. This suggests that a large group of students appraise the abilities of their peers as better than their own. The mode of this question is 1 which suggests that a not insignificant number of students feel this very strongly. What strikes me as interesting about this response is that, if students are not willing to produce English freely in front of others, they may not be basing their appraisal of others' abilities on something they have seen in class. They might be basing their opinions based on an idea that they have created.

Question 11 shows that students strongly disagree with the proposition "I don't understand why some people get so upset about English class." This suggests that many students are well aware of reasons why some students are anxious during English classes and also that peers are very aware of what is going on around them rather than being consumed with their own anxiety. It may also suggest that students are very perceptive of anxious behavioural cues in the classroom, which may be an asset to a teacher who is looking to make the classroom a less anxious environment.

Question 30 provoked the strongest response of the three questions selected for this presentation, this time with students agreeing that the grammar burden was overwhelming for them. Again, the mode of the results was one, suggesting that there is a particularly anxious group among the students.

REFLECTING ON THE RESULTS

What do these results say about the prevalence of anxiety in my English classrooms? I can say with certainty that anxiety presents a problem for the majority of my students. However, the degree to which individual students may be suffering from anxiety and how this impacts their performance requires further investigation and deeper reflection. I therefore find myself concerned with two particular points:

1. Why are students so anxious about the ability of other students when production in my classrooms is limited?
2. Why are students overwhelmed by the amount of grammar rules in English despite having undertaken six years of English study?

Generally, anxiety is contrasted with fear in that the threat is not usually known, so an inability to appraise accurately may contribute to stress. My initial answer to both these questions, then, is appraisal. Students in my English classrooms appear to be overestimating the ability of others, overestimating the amount of work required to learn English, and underestimating their own ability. In short, they do not seem to be able to appraise the situation around them accurately. This introduces an unknown element to the English classroom and exacerbates anxious thoughts and feelings. The reasons for this problem may not be readily apparent, but the survey results do offer some insights.

First, let us look at the first question from above. A majority of students showed signs of anxiety when asked about assessing the ability of other students, but is their appraisal rational? If students are taking an English class, then we can assume that they are not proficient users of the language, so they probably do not have the ability to assess another student's utterances for accuracy. What, then, could students be basing their ideas on? Some students, as well as engaging in coping behaviours, may actually be constructing ideas about the classroom to reinforce their beliefs. Perhaps there are confident students in the class who the teacher can rely on to answer questions, and these students are called upon more readily. This may give the perception that those students are more capable, as they are likely to be praised by some teachers despite their answer not being absolutely perfect. An anxious student may then develop the idea that these confident students are more capable than them as a way to avoid volunteering. This has the unintended effect of students not actually being able to measure their capabilities, however, so it may result in a vicious cycle in which the student continuously retreats from producing in front of others, but also has fewer opportunities to test their ability and receive feedback. In short, the students may create the idea of themselves as less capable as a coping mechanism, which in turn becomes a sincere belief.

The second question presents an equally puzzling problem. The majority of university students in Japan will have had at least six years of mandatory English education. The universities I work for are both private, and the associated junior high schools and high schools that most of the students went to have three or four lesson hours in English every week. It is quite plausible that someone could become a proficient speaker of English with this amount of education, but the students that I surveyed expressed a strong anxiety towards the amount of grammar rules required to learn English, suggesting that they were not confident in their ability. Reflecting upon this, I wondered if the way of teaching can cause students to poorly evaluate what is expected of them. This is something that is beyond the scope of the FLCAS, but it is an area I have a strong interest in and something I wish to pursue by doing further research. Many junior and senior high schools in Japan are known to use a grammar translation approach known as *yakudoku* which is considered to help students prepare for their entrance exams for university. Indeed, the schools associated with these two universities use this method which prioritises the teaching of complex grammar and vocabulary at the expense of production practice, particularly in terms of speaking. Some students may indeed see success on the English sections of their exams and may evaluate themselves highly. Universities in Japan, however, are expected to prepare students for the world of work, so the focus is often on all-English lessons with a non-Japanese teacher and an expectation that the students share their ideas in groups or presentations in front of their peers. It might be no surprise, then, that students feel overwhelmed by the demands of university education if they are confronted with a completely new style of teaching that expects them to use previously neglected skills. This mismatch may be a cause of anxiety, as students are no longer able to appraise themselves by their previous yardstick, causing them to overestimate what is required of them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ALLEVIATING ANXIETY IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Anxiety may be an ever-present problem in language classrooms, but it may not always be easy to spot, especially if the students are of a different culture to the teacher. The first step in any intervention might be to identify more noticeable signs of anxiety in the language classroom. This

may be difficult, but it can improve with practice. If a student appears to be doing something that may come across as rude or disruptive, give them the benefit of the doubt and withhold judgment. If students are using their phone, does their facial expression seem interested in what is on the screen or do they appear stressed? Are they interacting with the phone intently or are they just looking for a way to keep their fingers occupied? There may be a very subtle difference between a student who genuinely does not care and a student who is overwhelmed by the demands of the language classroom. Also, my implementation of the survey identified that students may be very aware of the anxious feelings of other students, so this may be reflected in the class atmosphere. If students are unwilling to speak, some may interpret this as laziness or an unwillingness to interact. However, this may actually be a sign that students are anxious and might require a little more guidance in what they do. Next time, if students are silent in the classroom, maybe it is a sign that students need more information or explicit instruction for them to be able to appraise the situation accurately and act accordingly.

There may also be ways that teachers can structure classes over the semester to alleviate anxiety without direct intervention. Rather than asking students to come straight to the front of the classroom or to present their answers to a question without preparation, demands could be slowly increased over the course of a semester. In the first lesson, students could be asked to introduce themselves while sitting at their seat after being given a generous amount of time to prepare (both the words and mentally). In the next lesson, they could be asked to stand up at their desk and say a few words. Demands could be increased gradually throughout the semester until eventually students are comfortable coming to the front of the class and speaking without preparation.

As my analysis of the results determined that students may be unable to appraise accurately, it may be useful to help students do this. They may be given five minutes at the end of the class to reflect upon their progress that day. This can be structured in such a way that students are guided into assessing the evidence for their assumptions and critically evaluating their beliefs. They could be asked to answer questions such as “How many times did I volunteer to answer a question in class today?” or “How well did I understand this lesson compared to last week?” These simple questions may offer students a chance to understand that they are indeed making progress and English learning might be a steep challenge, but perhaps not as overwhelming as they had thought.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Coming to the end of the presentation, I felt a sense of relief that I had been able to share my research with the audience who seemed to have a keen interest in what I had to say. The audience members were enthusiastic with their questions. One member seemed to have a strong interest in using my Japanese translation of the FLCAS at their own school, which of course I was happy to oblige. The response to my presentation allayed any anxiety I had at the start of the presentation, and it made me empathise with my own students in the sense that it is very difficult to put yourself out there in front of others, especially so when speaking a foreign language. However, putting myself and my research out there offered me the chance to meet like-minded and supportive people who helped me consider my research from different perspectives and undertake the critical reflection that is required to become a better researcher. Creating the same supportive space for my students to undertake these challenges, alleviate their anxious feelings, and become more confident learners is a new priority after this experience.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the results of my research suggest there is a general feeling of anxiety in my classrooms. I identified that the students’ inability to appraise themselves and the situation around themselves accurately may be a primary cause of their anxiety. This may be caused by their previous English education and a conflict that appears when they enter university. The suggestions I offered involved

teachers being more empathetic to students and withholding judgement. Teachers could also stage activities to introduce anxiety-inducing tasks gradually. The students themselves may also be asked to think critically about their performance in the classroom at the end of each class to encourage them to appraise their abilities better. Anxiety may be a common problem in language classrooms, but if teachers and students adapt, there may be more solutions to the problem than first thought.

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The Effects of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity on Eikaiwa Teachers

ABSTRACT

Eikaiwa teachers experience workplace issues that can be understood as role conflict and role ambiguity. Role conflict refers to the dueling pressures between roles that can cause poor results or not being able to finish tasks for one or both roles. Role ambiguity refers to the lack of clarity of a role, which may result in the role not being performed appropriately. Role conflict and role ambiguity have been found to be predictors of symptoms of burnout. In this study, Eikaiwa teachers were interviewed to examine if role conflict and role ambiguity were present and how symptoms of burnout were connected to these experiences. Results showed that examples of role conflict and role ambiguity lead to Eikaiwa teachers experiencing symptoms of burnout which further led to their decision to continue teaching or to leave the teaching profession. This study may be useful for teacher development in terms of taking action to create a better working environment.

Keywords: role conflict, role ambiguity, teacher burnout, eikaiwa teachers

My first teaching position was at an Eikaiwa school. There I learned the basics in teaching that included how to handle students of all ages as well as how to teach with different proficiency levels within the same class. However, I soon realized that working in the Eikaiwa industry was so much more than being present in the classroom and teaching English. My role as a teacher included different responsibilities that I was not initially aware of when I started teaching at the Eikaiwa school. This led to myself feeling burned out and not understanding why I had those feelings. I also noticed my colleagues exhibiting signs of exhaustion, both physically and emotionally. After leaving the Eikaiwa industry, those feelings and observations stayed with me and drove my curiosity in wanting to understand more about burnout in teaching. Furthermore, I wanted to understand how Eikaiwa teacher experiences could contribute to burnout. While reading on the topic of burnout, I learned about role conflict and role ambiguity and how they can be predictors of teacher burnout.

Research on role conflict and role ambiguity has identified symptoms of burnout in the teaching field by showing stressors caused by the workplace environment. This has given researchers a clearer picture on how stressors can lead to burnout within the teaching profession. One part of my MA study was to identify if role conflict and role ambiguity are present in teachers working within the Eikaiwa industry by analyzing their experience through workplace issues.

UNDERSTANDING ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY

Rizzo et al. (1970) defined a role to be “a set of expectations about behavior for a position in a social structure” and said expectations are “ascribed to the role by the focal person filling that position or

by others who relate to the role or simply have notions about it" (p. 155). A teacher's role will have different meanings depending on the type of teacher. For example, Eikaiwa teachers can have responsibilities beyond teaching regarding student recruitment or selling additional school materials to students that are not shared by primary or secondary school teachers.

Reflecting on my own time in the Eikaiwa industry, I realized that I had more than one role. I was a teacher, an office administrator, a teacher trainer, and a promoter for the company. I found that each role in itself had its own set of expectations and responsibilities. I also realized that these roles did not fit together and created stress because I was trying to not only complete my tasks on time, but also to do a good job by completing the tasks fully. The stress I experienced was role conflict. Rizzo et al. (1970) defined role conflict as the "compatibility and incompatibility in the requirements of the role, where congruency or compatibility is judged relative to a set of standards or conditions which impinge upon role performance" (p. 155).

Another issue I found myself facing was not understanding what my roles were. I knew I was a teacher, but other responsibilities that were expected of me did not fit within the teacher role. Other expectations included completing administration work by communicating with the head office, promoting the school by posting advertisements in mailboxes, or asking students to sign up for additional classes. Whenever I was asked to take on a new role, I didn't fully understand what I was expected to do. I would ask myself, what do I write to the head office? Should I be formal or be direct? How do I sell additional classes? Should I keep asking students to sign up for more classes if I don't fill in every available class time? These questions and the lack of clarity are forms of role ambiguity. Role ambiguity is focused into two parts: (a) the predictability of one's behavior and (b) the clarity of behavioral requirements which would serve as a guide to provide knowledge on which behavior is appropriate (Rizzo et al., 1970). I found their study interesting because it also addressed issues regarding organizational and management practices, leadership behavior, satisfaction, anxiety, and propensity to leave the job.

THE EIKAIWA INDUSTRY

The Japanese word *Eikaiwa* means "English conversation" but also refers to an English language school in Japan that offers English language classes to both adults and children (Kubota, 2020). Eikaiwa schools offer language classes to both children, starting as young as 6 months old (AEON, n.d.), and adults. Lessons are offered in private or group formats. The content for each class can vary in terms of topics, but can focus on speaking, listening, reading, grammar and vocabulary (AEON, n.d.; ECC, 2022) as well as helping students prepare for language proficiency tests.

TEACHER EXPECTATIONS IN WORKING AND NON-WORKING HOURS

In a typical 40-hour work week, Eikaiwa teachers are contracted to work a minimum of 25 teaching hours (AEON, n.d.) to as many as 37 (NOVA, n.d.). Non-teaching responsibilities can include lesson planning, promoting and selling of company materials, counseling students, making textbook recommendations, making student progress reports, and cleaning the school. Because planning lessons can be time consuming, teachers are encouraged to practice "good time management skills and flexibility" (AEON, n.d.). Although books and teaching materials are provided by the school, teachers can be expected to create their own extra materials needed for the classes they will be teaching (Sakamoto, 2014). These materials can include copies of book chapters, vocabulary cards, and any kind of visual material needed to support the teaching of their lesson (Sakamoto, 2014).

There are instances where Eikaiwa teachers are put under extreme pressure by their schools. For example one teacher was "required to come up with lesson plans and teaching materials," making over 2,300 letter and vocabulary cards within a 2-month time span after 10 days of training (Sakamoto, 2014). This particular case was investigated by the Kanazawa Labor Standards Inspection Office and it was revealed that the teacher had worked an estimated 82 hours at home to create

the cards (Sakamoto, 2014). The father of the teacher "applied to the Kanazawa Labor Standards Inspection Office for recognition that his daughter's death was caused by her job" (Sakamoto, 2014).

In my experience, I was contracted to work 28-32 teaching hours over a 40-hour work week. During certain times of the year, I had a schedule of 34-38 teaching hours a week. In these cases, I worked overtime. However, when I asked for compensation, my manager scolded me for making such a request. Even though I ended up being paid for this work, I was told to explicitly discuss such a request before actually making it. In addition, I also worked at home because I felt that I had to in order to prepare for my lessons. This experience made me question my priorities in my role as a teacher and an employee. I needed to complete my lesson plans and to do so, I needed to work overtime. However, I found myself questioning whether I was a good employee if I couldn't finish my work within working hours. I also was unclear on the rules of when it is appropriate to ask for overtime compensation. Now I reflect on it and I believe I was experiencing both role conflict and role ambiguity. After reading about role conflict and role ambiguity as well as teacher burnout, I wanted to help Eikaiwa teachers by researching and exposing which workplace issues led to experiencing role conflict and role ambiguity so that teachers can understand how this could lead to teacher burnout.

MY RESEARCH FOCUS

This study was part of a MA thesis I completed in understanding burnout as experienced by Eikaiwa teachers. My aims in the MA thesis were to uncover specific stressors related to role conflict and role ambiguity that participants may have experienced during their time working in the Eikaiwa industry, understand the connections between participant experiences and symptoms of burnout, and highlight the potential causes that have led to their decisions in continuing to work in the Eikaiwa industry, leave the industry, or quit teaching altogether.

For my MA thesis, I utilized two methods of data collection: a survey consisting of 21 questions and a follow-up interview. The first seven questions of the survey elicited the participants' background information: name (optional), gender (optional), age, country of origin, educational background, and the number of years of teaching in Eikaiwa and non-Eikaiwa settings. In addition to the participants' background information, the survey included eight questions regarding their Eikaiwa responsibilities. The participants rated their Eikaiwa experiences on 5-point Likert scale items 1 being the lowest rating and 5 the highest. The topics the items covered included relationships with managers, relationships with co-workers, fair pay, comfortableness at work, and overall satisfaction with the position. They were also asked to provide any additional information regarding their experience. The follow-up interview included questions that asked participants to provide further details on their Eikaiwa experiences. For example, if a participant indicated that they had had poor relationships with managers, I would ask them to provide more details and to explain why they rated that topic with a 1.

Fifty-six people who met the selection criteria answered my survey. The selection criteria first included a willingness to be interviewed. Second, they had to have Eikaiwa teaching experience (not, for example, teaching English conversation at a university). Third, they needed to have at least one year of experience in the Eikaiwa industry. Fourth, I aimed to include non-Japanese and Japanese teachers, so I checked their nationality. Lastly, I considered their answers to the survey items that were related to possible signs of burnout with a minimum score of 1 on the 5-point Likert-scale indicating numerous potential signs of burnout. I calculated their average score across these items and used it to help identify prospective interviewees. In the end, 10 people agreed—via email correspondence—to be interviewed. I should point out that three of the survey respondents quit the teaching field altogether at the time of their interviews, therefore none of the participants were referred to as teachers in my study.

THE MAIN ISSUES THE CURRENT AND FORMER TEACHERS EXPERIENCED

I analyzed the experiences of the survey respondents by comparing them to the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The MBI is a questionnaire to measure the intensity and frequency of the three symptoms of burnout which are Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment. I also compared experiences to items in a role conflict and role ambiguity questionnaire developed by Rizzo et al. (1970). The survey respondents showed similarities in experiencing both role conflict and role ambiguity during their time while working in the Eikaiwa industry. The respondents also showed signs of experiencing teacher burnout. Here I focus on how the respondents experienced role conflict and role ambiguity.

ROLE CONFLICT

Role conflict, the dueling pressures regarding the completion or incompletion of the teacher's roles, appeared when discussing workplace issues for seven survey respondents. Five participants experienced role conflict when confronted with lesson preparation versus the amount of time within their working hours to plan the actual lessons. In an interview, one former teacher who had six and half years of experience working in the Eikiawa industry said his lessons suffered because of the lack of time he had to prepare while finishing his other office responsibilities. He said that during the weeks he had 40 lessons, he could not organize his work time efficiently to complete everything. He explained he felt he was doing something wrong because he could not organize his time very well. This example showed the conflict that many teachers face about whether to complete office responsibilities as an employee or to prepare for their lessons in their role as a teacher.

ROLE AMBIGUITY

Role Ambiguity, the unclear expectations within a teacher's role, appeared when discussing workplace issues with seven participants. Two survey respondents talked about how their training was focused only on observing and emulating the lessons of outgoing teachers. They both expressed not understanding the teaching expectations before they entered the classroom; they felt unprepared and uncertain of their roles. Another two participants experienced Role Ambiguity relating to the issue of how to encourage students to purchase additional lessons, on top of the student's weekly scheduled lesson, as well as unclear financial goals for the school and the kind of lessons to sell.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TEACHERS

The participants who had experienced role conflict and role ambiguity had also experienced the three symptoms of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment. Schwab and Iwanicki (1982) found in their research that role conflict and role ambiguity can be predictors of symptoms of burnout. In a similar way, participants in my study experienced burnout because of conflicting roles and unclear expectations. Three participants that experienced role conflict and role ambiguity have remained working for the Eikaiwa industry. Two participants who experienced role conflict and role ambiguity have left the Eikaiwa industry, but have continued to work in the teaching profession. Those who have remained teaching in Eikaiwa or a different teaching field said the reason they continue to teach, despite experiencing burnout, is because they enjoy teaching. Three participants who experienced role conflict and role ambiguity have completely left the Eikaiwa industry and the teaching profession altogether. Their reasons for leaving were that the responsibilities of education were too big, there was too much stress and exhaustion, and in one case they did not have a teaching license to continue teaching outside of Eikaiwa.

FURTHER QUESTIONS AND MY OWN SOLUTIONS

My MA study showed that teachers working in the Eikaiwa industry experienced symptoms of burnout through workplace issues that correspond with role conflict and role ambiguity. The results of my survey showed that teachers experience role conflict, for example, when they are forced to choose between preparing for lessons or finishing other school responsibilities which can impact the quality of their lessons. Other workplace issues that can correspond to role ambiguity such as having unclear expectations regarding an Eikaiwa school's policy on selling lessons can also lead to teachers experiencing symptoms of burnout. Although some teachers who experienced role conflict and role ambiguity have remained in the Eikaiwa industry, it is also causing teachers to leave the teaching profession completely.

After completing my study, I found myself asking more questions. If role conflict and role ambiguity can lead to Eikaiwa teachers experiencing burnout, how can the workplace issues that were discussed leading to these experiences be prevented? Furthermore, what are some solutions for Eikaiwa teachers who are already feeling the effects of role conflict and role ambiguity? Although the respondent's experiences highlighted some workplace issues that were examples of role conflict and role ambiguity, I believe there may be other topics that haven't been explored that also lead to role conflict and role ambiguity in the Eikaiwa industry. By discussing these other issues, teachers can uncover why they might be experiencing role conflict, role ambiguity, and burnout.

As part of my MA work, I did not discuss possible solutions with the participants. However, after the completion of my study, I found that I became more aware of my own workplace issues and how to prevent experiencing role conflict and role ambiguity. One example where I avoided experiencing role ambiguity was when I was presented with a new employment contract that was unclear regarding expectations about the role I would be performing. I therefore asked the employer for more clarity and made sure that the updated clarification was part of the contract so that both I and my employer were aware of my actual responsibilities. Another example where I navigated my way through an experience of role conflict was by acknowledging that I had two dueling roles within my workplace. For each responsibility, I had to prioritize what I felt was more important and be confident in my decision when following through to complete different tasks. Prioritizing and also communicating with my managers about the roles and their expectations helped reduce the potential of experiencing burnout. These solutions are not going to solve every workplace issue, but by acknowledging my role(s) and understanding potential problems that can lead to role conflict and role ambiguity, I have found that I am not experiencing burnout symptoms as intensely as I was before my study. This does not mean I can avoid burnout completely, but I can have more control in how workplace issues can affect my well-being.

Although I enjoyed my experience working at Eikaiwa schools, teaching students, and making life-long friendships with my co-workers, I left the Eikaiwa industry feeling exhausted. Furthermore, some of my former Eikaiwa co-workers are no longer teaching. They explicitly told me that because of their experience they no longer want to be in that kind of work environment. I felt sad for future students who would miss out, because I believe they were good teachers. If current Eikaiwa teachers are more aware of their roles in the Eikaiwa industry and how it is affecting them, I believe this awareness could be one step towards preventing teachers from leaving the Eikaiwa industry.

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Creation of a Technology-Based Pronunciation Evaluation System to Foster Autonomous Pronunciation Acquisition for Second Language Learners and Enhance Independent Learning

ABSTRACT

This article is a reflection about my first attendance at a conference. At the LD30 Conference, I made a presentation about a study which aimed to explore effective ways to use technology to promote independent learning among second language learners. Specifically, the study focused on second language learners' acquisition of understandable pronunciation so that they can speak with confidence. In my study, I tried to find ways to enhance the ability of second language learners to acquire comprehensible pronunciation independently. The experience of attending this conference enabled me to understand better what it takes to be a researcher.

Keywords: reflection, education technology, pronunciation evaluation system

I initially did not want to attend an academic conference. However, my perception changed when I participated and presented my research process in the conference held at Gakushūin University on October 21st and 22nd, 2023. Being a part of LD30 altered my perspective on research and conference attendance. The purpose of this writing is to share my reflections from my experience at LD30.

The title of my presentation was "Creation of a Technology-Based Pronunciation Evaluation System to Foster Autonomous Pronunciation Acquisition for Second Language Learners and Enhance Independent Learning". I am deeply interested in both education and technology especially as world changing inventions such as generative AI are being created today. I enjoy contemplating how current advanced technology can aid second language learners and the opportunities technology-integrated education can create for learners' development. As a graduate student specializing in media at Komazawa university, my goal was to develop something beneficial for students studying English. Although my primary role is that of a student, I also teach English to adults. These experiences piqued my interest in creating such a tool. As a student myself, I observed that lack of confidence in pronunciation often hindered my classmates from speaking their second language during discussions at my university. This led me to believe that having confidence in pronunciation is a crucial skill in real-life communication, yet not many language educators in modern classrooms focus on this aspect.

From a teacher's standpoint, I noticed during listening activities that students struggled to comprehend words they were already familiar with. This experience emphasized the need for individualized pronunciation learning opportunities. I dedicated half a semester to developing a pronunciation evaluation system. However, as I delved deeper into research and development, I began losing focus and interest. I found myself more intrigued by observing classroom phenomena rather than solely creating a system. Despite my wavering commitment, I felt obligated to attend the conference, though I saw little meaning in presenting a poster for a project I had halted. It was my first conference attendance, which made me question if I was the right person to participate.

The 21st was the day of my poster presentation. Upon completing registration, numerous participants warmly welcomed me. Contrary to my expectations of a cold atmosphere, I encountered a friendly environment. Additionally, the presentation style differed significantly from what I anticipated. I had expected presenters to solely showcase research results while the audience listened passively. However, at LD30, many presenters encouraged discussions, sharing their teaching experiences and perspectives to enhance teaching methods. One reason I had initially hesitated to attend academic conferences was the perceived tendency for participants to be overly critical. However, the warm atmosphere at LD30 provided hope of gaining ideas from both teachers and students to further my research. During my presentation, many teachers and students approached me in a friendly manner and engaged with my poster presentation.

Surprisingly, the adjacent presentation focused on the necessity of revamping English education in Japanese schools to foster inclusivity within society. It aimed to explore potential links between discrimination, exclusive mindsets, and English education, proposing inclusive teaching approaches for societal unity. This presentation resonated with mine as the presenter also discussed English as a lingua franca. It prompted me to question how my system should evaluate pronunciation if native English speakers couldn't comprehend English spoken between non-native speakers, yet they understood each other. Consequently, it became evident that evaluating pronunciation is a complex task. Additionally, a teacher asked about the criteria I applied. I mentioned three criteria: accuracy, fluency, and completeness. Subsequently, the teacher inquired if I had additional criteria to consider. One feature I contemplated for the system was including a function for learners to perform self-assessment using five criteria, enabling them to identify the pronunciation features they were confident in. The teacher suggested that while adding more features might enhance usability, a successful system should remain simple. This advice made me realize that adding more features increased the system's complexity, although I aimed to create a tool for students to autonomously acquire understandable pronunciation.

I appreciated the numerous teachers and students who shared their teaching and learning experiences about pronunciation. One student concurred that a lack of pronunciation skills demotivated students from speaking aloud. Although I temporarily suspended this project, my interest in education and technology remains. This experience prompted me to reassess my current project. Several teachers discussed EduTech, indicating widespread interest in the coexistence of education and technology.

By the end of the LD30 conference, I found myself rejuvenated by the diverse perspectives shared. While initially disheartened by suspending my pronunciation evaluation system project, the discussions reshaped my approach. Conversations about EduTech reignited my passion for innovative educational technologies, particularly in language acquisition. The conference underscored the intricate link between education, technology, and societal inclusivity, broadening my perspective. LD30 wasn't merely a platform for research presentations; it was a transformative space for communal learning. Leaving the conference, I am inspired to research more accessible tools that bridge the gap between technology and effective pedagogy, reaffirming my commitment to empowering both learners and educators.

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Listening to the Voices of Aboriginal People in Their Struggle for Cultural and Linguistic Revitalization

ABSTRACT

In my Story Circle at the LD30 Conference, I shared how my process of understanding Aboriginal people's cultural and language revitalization in Australia has shifted from fact-based to voice-based while listening to Aboriginal people's stories. In my journey of understanding, I concluded that while thinking about Aboriginal people in Australia, we also need to look at the situation around us; listening will lead us to not just understanding but to supporting indigenous peoples to revitalize their languages and cultures. In response to my story, participants shared their own perspectives and experiences. I collected their email addresses, and I am planning to be in contact with them so that we can write up a collaborative short article (1,000 words) together about recognizing minorities as a first step and getting interested in their situations. I have been listening to Aboriginal people's voices, and, after the Story Circle, I realized that it is time for us to look at the issues from new angles, one that is voice-based.

MY JOURNEY OF UNDERSTANDING

I acknowledge with respect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples from the past to the future are guardians of the Australian land.

In my Story Circle at the LD30 conference, I shared my journey of understanding of Aboriginal people and their issues, which included online fieldwork and a visit to Australia. I could reflect on my story and gain new angles from the audience. I wish to keep deepening my understanding as well as finding how I could spread my story in an effective way. In this article, I will explain what I shared, people's responses to my presentation and how I want to continue my journey.

WHAT DID I SHARE IN MY STORY CIRCLE?

WHY I CHOSE AUSTRALIA

I chose Aboriginal people's issues in Australia because of my long interest in indigenous people's language revitalization. When I was in high school, I first learned about indigenous people in Canada and assimilation toward them (a process of taking away a culture, including language, of specific groups of people and making them conform into another culture). It was very shocking for me, and I decided to inform myself more in university. In 2022, I chose Australia in a seminar at university to deepen my understanding of indigenous people's issues since it was well known for its indigenous people.

THE HISTORY

Starting the research journey, I found out that Australia had an assimilation policy toward Aboriginal people. The Stolen Generations is one of the keywords we need to know to grasp the history of this policy: It describes the Aboriginal people who were taken away from their parents and put into "white" people's schools to assimilate their Aboriginality. They were prohibited to speak Aboriginal languages, made to feel negative about their traditions, and dehumanized by having their belongings, identities, self-control/self-esteem, and basic rights stolen from them. They even became victims of mass killings (National Museum of Australia, 2018). The ultimate purpose was to maintain the blood ideology of European people by getting rid of the "blackness" of Aboriginal people. In 2008, the former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, officially apologized for the policy. Nonetheless, in October 2023, in a referendum organised by the advisory body called the Indigenous Voice to Parliament, people were asked whether First Nations People should be recognized in the constitution, and the majority voted "No".

PEOPLE'S VOICES

As part of my research process, I listened to video testimonies. One of the speakers was Rita Wenberg (Stolen Generations' testimonies, n.d.). She has been a victim of the Stolen Generations since she was three years old. She has been dealing with many traumas including identity issues and silence. As for her identity, she commented that, "I really thought I was white. If you do go back home, which I did, I met a lot of, you know, it wasn't like family. You know, they were my – they tried to make me welcome. But I just couldn't fit in." In my understanding, she meant that although she could finally go back where she was supposed to belong, she did not feel she was a member of the family/community. Also, she talked about her silence: "A lot of people don't know what happened to me. My daughter doesn't even know. I won't tell the kids, it's not right for them to know." Because of the policies that lead to the Stolen Generations, she cannot feel a sense of belonging to her own Aboriginal community, and her experiences are so traumatic that she does not want her children to know her story.

Another person I talked about in my Story Circle was an Aboriginal activist/rapper, DOBBY. He is a Murrawarri and Filipino man, and addresses today's issues of Aboriginal people, land rights and the environment. For instance, in one of his songs, *Walk Away* (2022), he expresses what assimilation has done to his Murrawarri people, but despite the struggles they have been facing, people in society tell them to, "let it go". He wants people to listen to what he has gone through and felt as an Aboriginal person, and wants to share with others the situation he and Murrawarri people have been put in.

MY FIELDWORK IN AUSTRALIA

While I was doing research in Japan, I listened to different Aboriginal people's voices. And this led me to do some fieldwork in Australia for two weeks. In February 2023, I visited Sydney (Gadigal lands) and an Aboriginal community on the coast about 90 minutes away by plane. Before going to Australia, I contacted different organizations and individuals, and arranged several visits and interviews with local individuals and organizations working for Aboriginal people and communities. My goal was to listen to people's strong voices and see their situation with my own eyes so that I could better understand their perspectives and concerns. Talking with them, I could see how each Aboriginal person and their ally proactively go to great lengths to revitalize their languages and cultures in their own ways, and pass them down to the next generations.

PEOPLE'S RESPONSES AND MY COMMENTS

For me, people's reactions to my Story Circle presentation were fascinating, and I am very glad that I could share about Aboriginal people and their issues, and my journey of understanding. They got to know about the Aboriginal people and their issues by listening to their voices. Through reflecting

on my presentation, the audience developed their own interests in Aboriginal people and their issues in Australia as well as ones in Japan.

It seems to me that Rita Wenberg's voice was very powerful and made the audience contemplate Aboriginal people's issues. Koa (pseudonym) responded that she was shocked about her being a victim of the Stolen Generation, and she commented on Rita's identity issue (despite her Aboriginal background, she believes she is European). She realized how much Rita's experiences of assimilation have affected her sense of identity even though she is no longer technically under the policy. Koa's point of view reminded me of long-lasting impacts of assimilation. She listened to Rita and considered the Aboriginal issue from her own perspective. Another participant, Julia (pseudonym) made a connection to Rita with her own experience. Because of her cultural background/identity, she sometimes feels excluded from a Japanese community. Rita was relatable for her in this point.

After my presentation, members of the audience expanded their interests to Aboriginal people's issues in their own ways. Yosef (pseudonym) mentioned that he did not know about Aboriginal people and their issues in general and knew only their existence. He is now interested in their history and if there are any cases in which people have sorted out their issues. Some of the audience expanded their interests to Japan's case as well, particularly the Ainu. Koa and Yosef shared that they wanted to know more about Ainu people, their issues, and solutions.

Finally, in a reflection, Julia also mentioned hope for future change of Aboriginal people: Even if one action is not big, a mass of them can lead to a better situation. We, the participants, and I have seen the dark history that Aboriginal peoples have had to endure and the languages at risk of dying, yet we could find a light to a better future for Aboriginal people.

AFTER MY STORY CIRCLE

By doing the Story Circle, I could get new perspectives from people and realize how powerful people's voices are. It was meaningful for me that I could know what people wanted to understand more about Aboriginal people's issues, and how they see the issues through their lenses. Plus, I was very surprised about reactions from the audiences to Aboriginal people's voices, especially Rita's. People's voices can be very influential and let people come to realize their situations. I hope my voice about Aboriginal people and their issues has led you all to ponder the issues and keep deepening your understanding in your own unique ways.

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Reducing Food Loss and Waste in Japan: An Environmentally Friendly Approach

ABSTRACT

The poster I presented at the LD30 Conference was about reducing food loss and waste. I proposed one idea on how to reduce food loss and waste in Japan based on two research questions. In my presentation, I first provided the background of food loss and waste by referring to environmental damages and the north-south divide, including the differences between food loss and waste. Second, I explained the past situation of food loss and waste in Japan based on my reading of the literature. Additionally, I compared the actions that had been taken for food loss and waste in Japan and Europe. Finally, I offered and discussed my idea to deal with food loss and waste in Japan. I concluded my session by summarizing the main points and talking to the participants about the issue and actions that could be taken to reduce food loss and waste.

First, let me explain how I decided to work on this project. I have been taking a course in my department in which we were given an assignment to write a paper about social issues. I took this course to encourage me to work on academic writing which I wasn't good at. In this course, I decided to search about food loss and waste. Seeing the actions or policies towards food loss and waste in Japan made me feel it can be encouraged more. It motivated me to search and think about this issue. That is why I have done my research about food loss and waste in university focusing on SDG goal 12. Then I had the opportunity to participate in the LD30 Conference, so I decided to share my ideas with participants in a poster session.

In my research, I focused on the situation in developed countries to consider suggestions for Japan by setting two research questions:

1. What is the situation of food loss and waste in Japan in comparison to the rest of the world?
2. What can be done to reduce Japan's food loss and waste?

MY POSTER

In this poster presentation, I proposed one idea on how to reduce food loss and waste in Japan. The poster is reproduced below. To guide my thinking, I set two research questions which appear at the top left of the poster. Below this, I then provided the background of food loss and waste by referring to environmental damages and the north-south divide including the differences between food loss and waste. Below this, I answered my first question by looking into the current situation of food loss and waste in Japan through my reading of the literature ('Current Situation in Japan'). I also compared the actions that have been taken for food loss and waste in Japan and Europe

('What Other Countries Do'). Finally, I offered and discussed my idea to deal with food loss and waste in Japan to answer the second research question. ('My Connection' > 'My Idea').

Reducing Food Loss and Waste in Japan : An Environmentally Friendly Approach

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One-third of the world's food production is thrown away every year.

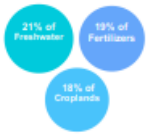
(WFP, 2021)

- **Food loss**: Being lost between harvesting and retailing
- **Food waste**: Being wasted at the consumption level

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **What is the situation of food loss and waste in Japan in comparison to the rest of the world?**
- **What can be done to reduce Japan's food loss and waste.**

BACKGROUNDS



There are three issues caused by food loss. First, damaging to natural resources. As the right figure shows, these amounts of resources for growing food are eventually consumed for food waste. Second, there are a great amounts of CO_2 emissions from carrying food products from place to place by vehicles which would be the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter, behind China and the US. In addition, there is the North-South (developed and developing countries) divide. North countries including Japan mainly happen at the consumption level while those happen before reaching consumers in the South. So, I focused on the North's situation to consider what Japan should do.

CURRENT SITUATION IN JAPAN

The left graph shows there is a great amount of food loss and waste in Japan even though it's gradually decreasing year by year. These are mainly from businesses such as supermarkets and restaurants, and from households. Japan relies on imports from overseas because of low self-sufficiency while they produce a high amount of food waste.

(Consumer Affairs Agency, 2020)

WHAT OTHER COUNTRIES DO

Denmark has supermarkets that sell food at discounted prices which can no longer be sold in common supermarkets because of the imminent expiration dates with discounted prices. The French parliament voted for the law to force supermarkets to give away unsold food that has reached sell-by date to volunteer or charity groups for supporting citizens who suffer from luck of food in December, 2015. A local councilor who encouraged legislating this law was aiming to spread this law to whole EU countries, and around the world eventually. These examples show that European countries are trying to reduce food loss and waste at the consumption level.

MY CONNECTION

I see actions for reducing food loss and waste in Japan, and the cafe where I'm working also has a service for that. So, I am eager to encourage more actions to reduce food loss and waste which is one of the big discussions in the current world.

SDGS LINK

Goal 12 of SDGs, aims to get the patterns of sustainable consumption and production which is categorized in four parts: planetary crisis, food loss and waste, reliance on natural resources, and electronic wastes.

MY IDEA

I would like to propose an idea to use vacant spaces of vehicles such as trains, and buses for carrying food to the people who need it. It is necessary to encourage supermarkets to put irregular-shaped vegetables and products nearing their expiration date in buses and sell these discounted prices. I learnt this idea from the activity which uses the vacant spaces of vehicles to carry local crops to elder's residences. There are two purposes:

- **Reducing the food which is thrown away before reaching consumers**
- **Being environmentally friendly**

There's no extra CO_2 emission by using vacant spaces. This idea makes other profits. By carrying food to elderly and physically disabled people, they can not only get food but also provide a space for them to communicate with each other. On the other hand, there are possible obstacles. There are fewer networks to find demands and build smooth operations at first. In adidition, without smooth operations, managing carrying products to consumers before the expiration date would be difficult. Therefore, it is necessary to find how to build well-organized operation systems by carrying surveys to local communities and merchandisers.

WHAT I LEARNED

From my research, I learned about the gap of food loss and waste among developed countries, and I found good policies or actions which other countries do to lead the situation better.

FROM SMALL CHANCES

I want everyone to get more interested in this issue through my poster. My proposal can start with a single truck, and I hope that this will develop over a wide area, with stronger ties to local supermarkets and farmers.

Learning for Change and Action, Making a Difference for the Future, Oct 21st, 2023.

PCP REFLECTION

I joined the LD30 Conference for my academic experience. In the preparation stage, making a big poster was a good way to wrap up my research and consider how to convey it to the audience. I was excited to speak up about my idea at an academic conference for the first time in my life.

On the day of LD30 (day 1, Oct 21), the session time flew by faster than I expected with valuable communications. There were both professors and students from various areas of Japan visiting my poster. There were two memorable episodes during the session.

First, several teachers visited my poster. One of them gave me a comment on my poster that world food transportation is the third largest CO2 emitter behind China and the US. This was surprising. In addition to what the professor pointed out, I put two more serious issues caused by food loss and waste on my poster. The first issue is the damage to natural resources caused by food loss (freshwater, fertilizers, and croplands). Food waste means disposing of food and natural resources. The second issue is the difference between developing countries and developed countries. In response to the section on my poster about waste loss in Japan, another professor asked me why it is considered serious although the graph in the poster shows the amount of food loss and waste in Japan has been declining for five years. I explained to him that it is obvious the amount has been reduced, but I pointed out that there was still 5.22 million tons of waste from households and businesses in 2020. This fact shouldn't be forgiven.

I explained to the teachers two examples from other countries. Denmarks' supermarkets sell goods at discounted prices which can no longer be sold in common supermarkets because of the imminent expiration dates. In France, the law forced supermarkets to give unsold food to charity groups who suffer from a lack of food. Considering these in mind, I put the idea of carrying extra food products to places where they are in demand in the vacant space of transportation. For example, on highway buses, there are spaces to put passengers' luggage, but there are extra spaces that contain nothing. Extra food could be carried in these spaces. It can reduce the food that retailers throw away. It's also environmentally friendly, not using extra vehicles. At this time, one of the teachers mentioned one of the actions in Japan. It is called "Second Harvest Japan". They play a role similar to food banks. So, I could get new knowledge which stimulates my ideas. The professors admired the fact that I've done research and tried to share in this session. They made me feel satisfied with all my work.

I had another valuable conversation with a student who is also learning English. Looking around my poster, she was interested in my idea to reduce food loss and waste. She told me that is interested in agriculture, and had some experience learning about farmers. Then she asked whether my idea could save farmers. From her perspective, one of the serious issues of agriculture is the lack of successors, people who can take over the running of farms after this generation. We came up with the idea to carry local crops from rural to urban areas so that people can get to know more about farmers or production areas. I feel that if customers knew more about the farmers who produce the goods they buy, they would feel more familiar with them, which would raise people's interest in agriculture. We had a nice discussion till the end.

Through my poster session, I learned various kinds of new things, and points of improvement in my research, and mostly I enjoyed sharing ideas with people who have different majors, and backgrounds. It gave me the confidence to try new things in English.

I appreciate it at all.

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Exploring Our Significance in Our Communities at a Learning Café

ABSTRACT

A learning café is a presentation format in which the presenter briefly shares about the presentation topic and then uses most of the time to facilitate discussion with the attendees for further exploration of the topic. As it was the author's first time to present at a learning café, this reflection paper will focus on my expectations and the actual experience. I was expecting to be able to discuss all the prompts I had prepared for the presentation, but in reality the attendees were only able to share about a portion of questions related to their communities. Advantages of the learning café format are that attendees are actively involved in the presentation and have more egalitarian interactions. Conversely, those positives may be viewed as negatives by those who prefer traditional presenter-focused presentations. For instance, with learning cafés the presenter needs to be more of a facilitator rather than an expert, responding to what the attendees view as meaningful. The attendees also need to be prepared to share about the topics and participate actively.

Keywords: learning cafés, presentation styles, self-reflections

In this short-form reflection, I will share my experience facilitating a learning café at the Learner Development 30 (LD 30) Conference. Though I have presented many times, this was my first time with a learning café. Therefore, I will focus more on the presentation format instead of the session content. To begin, a learning café will be defined. Then I will explain how preparation for the café differed from preparation for a more traditional presentation. Next, I will detail my expectations for the café in contrast to the actual experience. Lastly, I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of learning cafés.

DEFINITION

According to LD 30's Conference session page, *Collaborative Learning Spaces*, a learning café begins with a short presentation about the topic to prepare the audience members to use the majority of the time for having discussions about the topic, and later to make mini-posters (2023). In comparison to traditional presentations, the focus in a learning café format is on active audience interaction rather than the presenter sharing. When searching online for "learning café", some results were related to educational institutions offering computer rooms with support staff, small group discussions or opportunities for online learning (EdPrepLab, n.d.; Lethbridge College, n.d.; University of Louisville, n.d.). However, the learner café format at the LD30 Conference has more similarities to the World Café Method (2023) which is credited to an American organization using collaborative group discussions to promote social change. The *Design Principles* (2023) of the

World Café Method, outline having a clear purpose, creating a safe space, posing a question or questions relevant to the attendees, ensuring all attendees share their viewpoints through group interactions, and ending with a time for reflection. However, the LD30 learner café differed by including a short presentation segment. Based on the above, it seemed a learner café should be audience centered instead of speaker centered, starting with a brief presentation, with most of the time being dedicated to group discussions about the presentation topic in a comfortable setting for sharing.

PREPARATIONS

The topic of the presentation was about communities and the ways that members' participation can potentially solve problems that the community is experiencing. Studying community development as a social work undergraduate and then community studies as a graduate student, community has always been important to me. However, at my previous job I began to shift my focus to being a more efficient classroom manager and forgot my role as a community worker. In April 2023, I started at a new university and became part of a new community. In preparation for this change, I realized how I needed to not only focus on being a competent adjunct lecturer, but also a nurturing community member. Since everyone possesses knowledge of their communities, it seemed like having LD30 attendees share their viewpoints would be preferable to me lecturing about community development theories. I was eager to learn more about how others were interacting in their communities.

To promote discussion in my learning café session, the slides I presented at the beginning included questions such as "What communities are you a part of?", "Do you have positive, negative or neutral feelings about this community?", "What is your role in your community?", and "Do you have ideas to make your community better?" At the former LD 20 conference, I recalled many Japanese students attending, so I wanted to give them, in addition to the other attendees, enough time to think about the topic first before the brainstorming sessions started. As a result, I created a worksheet about communities the participants belong to, issues their communities are experiencing, and possible solutions to these issues (Appendix A). The attendees completed the worksheet as an individual brainstorming activity. Next, they shared the contents with others. Then all attendees' contents were used for material creation in the form of mini-posters.

EXPECTATIONS

My expectation was that after an icebreaker, I would give a brief presentation containing the same questions that were mentioned above and that appeared at the top of the worksheet. This would allow the attendees to write down their answers to each prompt. This would be followed by a group discussion about the prompts, and then ending in a sharing session about the posters. It seemed that the mini-posters would be especially meaningful as they would concretely account for all the attendee's viewpoints from discussions. I felt sure that the session time limit of 55 minutes would allow for the completion of the above tasks.

REALITIES

Three university professors and one student attended my LD30 session. I shared my slides with the overview of the following points: 1) Community, 2) Community Role, 3) Challenges, 4) Initiatives, 5) Exchange, and 6) Thank You. I suggested moving the chairs to make a circle, so that discussions would be easier. After we had introduced ourselves to each other, I started with an icebreaker by asking everyone to share the beverage they order at a café and where they tend to get this beverage. Answers ranged from vending machine coffees for black canned coffees to Starbucks for seasonal drinks to small craft cafe shops near their workplaces. After the icebreaker, everyone received the worksheet. I asked attendees to write down their responses and later share their answers to "What communities are you a part of?" I expected most would talk about their universities.

However, except for the student, the communities discussed were our neighborhood, online, or religious communities. Next the question, “How do you feel about your community?” prompted attendees to share how strong or weak they felt their connections were to these communities. Though one member made mention of belonging to their community for a long time, they felt uncertain about how others viewed them and, to some extent, felt disconnected. Another member shared how creating a LINE group gave them a new community to participate in that was unique from the other communities they interacted with daily. It was interesting to hear about ways they developed and deepened their connections, or openly shared their disconnections and the challenges faced by their communities. As we took turns sharing and commenting on others’ remarks, 45 minutes quickly passed, and there was little time to directly discuss the roles we have as individuals in our community, community challenges, and initiatives to combat the challenges.

Subsequently, I was still hoping that the attendees would write down their ideas related to anything discussed so that they would be able to create the mini-posters. The student did so by writing the community they belonged to and asking if they could keep the paper. The rest of the attendees, as well as the student, continued sharing about their relationships with their communities for the remainder of the time. Though I had only gotten to the fourth of twelve slides and no mini-posters were produced, and although I had wanted to learn more about the attendees’ significance in their communities, using the time for meaningful conversations in a relaxed setting was much more valuable.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

There are many advantages to using a learning café at conferences. The first advantage is a more relaxed setting where audience members can also participate throughout the session, versus a traditional presentation setting where the audience may only have time to ask questions in the last few minutes. Besides, there is more time for presenter-attendee and attendee-attendee interactions. Another advantage is that it gives more opportunities for deeper discussions about the presented topic and for everyone to share their personal opinions and experience. A final advantage is that the presenter, who may not be an expert on the presentation topic, acts more as a facilitator - without the pressure of having to offer expert opinions to questions posed by attendees, so for more egalitarian settings, learning cafés are beneficial.

Potential disadvantages will arise if the presenter and the attendees are unfamiliar with learning cafés. Presenters who lack the skill to facilitate such forums will also affect the outcome. The presenter needs to create an atmosphere for sharing to take place and activities that allow for that to happen. One way to address these issues could be to begin with everyday topics to allow for rapport-building and use more open-ended questions throughout one’s presentation. In turn, the attendees need to be active at the learning café. This contrasts with traditional presentation settings where attendees, at the bare minimum, are expected to be quiet and not create any disruptions during the presenter’s talk. Ultimately, the presenter needs to allow everyone to comment on the topic. Furthermore, the presenter needs to be more flexible in contrast to the traditional presentation format where adjustments for time restraints can be done smoothly and covertly. However, if learning café attendees are involved in deep discussions, the presenter may have to forgo their original program. Nonetheless, despite some potential difficulties, I think that learning cafés are a favorable alternative to the traditional presentation format.

CONCLUSION

Learning cafés are interactive settings for topics to be discussed by not only the presenter but also the attendees. This style of presentation is ideal for those presenters who seek collaboration and potentially more meaningful interactions with the attendees. Furthermore, for those presenters who do not feel comfortable solely in the role of expert and seek to learn from the different perspectives

of others, learning cafés are advantageous. However, presenters will need to focus more on facilitating and the attendees will need to be more active in discussions and material creation. By facilitating a learning café at the LD30 conference, I found that I could learn a lot from the attendees about their communities in a more casual setting. Also, I felt less pressure to complete all the tasks I originally planned to do.

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APPENDIX A

EXPLORING OUR SIGNIFICANCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

How do I view my community? | What is my role in my community?/What can I contribute to my community? | How do the initiatives affect the individual (you) and community (classroom, university, field)? & What challenges do you anticipate for the individual (you) and community (classroom, university, field)? | What can we do as a community to overcome these challenges?

私は自分のコミュニティをどう見ているか?| 自分のコミュニティにおける自分の役割は何か／自分のコミュニティに貢献できることは何か | その取り組みは、個人（あなた）と地域社会（教室、大学、現場）にどのような影響を与えるか。個人（あなた）と地域社会（教室、大学、現場）にとって、どのような課題が予想されるか。| これらの課題を克服するために、コミュニティとして何ができるか？

My Community	My Role in the Community	Challenges	Initiatives

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My Experience When I Joined LD30 for the First Time

This was my first time attending a conference like LD30. I feel that I gained a lot of experience and new knowledge through this conference. In this reflection, I would like to write about the experiences and two new things I learned. In particular, I have realized the prejudice I had against people from other countries, and the importance of clarifying my thoughts. Overall, I will write about my experiences and what I have learned.

When I started working part-time at a restaurant after entering university, I had several difficult experiences when I served foreigners because I could not understand their language. Before attending the LD30 conference, I had a prejudice against foreigners as being difficult to talk to because of the language barrier. However, when I actually spoke with people from overseas, they were much easier to talk to than I had expected, as they used gestures and simple words to convey their opinions on the discussion topics in a way that was easy to understand even for someone like me who is not very good at English.

It was a good experience because I was able to eliminate my prejudice. By participating in this conference, I was able to learn that language is not the only way to communicate, and that even if people are of different nationalities and do not speak the same language, it does not mean that they cannot communicate with each other at all.

The second new thing I learned was how to clarify my thoughts. I learned this method from the work I did during Devon Anderson's presentation on communication. One of the activities that I enjoyed a lot was expressing my community in colours because I had never thought about my community in such a way, and the activity helped me imagine and visualise my community. After the presentation, I answered the question "What can we do as a community to overcome these challenges?" An action to make a difference for my community is to talk to people in different departments. Through workshops on leadership and positive psychology, I learned that it is important to have diverse perspectives and goals related to those perspectives in order to solve problems.

After attending the conference and thinking for myself about what the theme of this year's conference, "Learning for Change and Action, Making a Difference for the Future," was all about, two ideas emerged. The first idea is to set one's own goals and take action. I got this idea when I took a workshop at the LD30 Conference on leadership and "positive psychology". In this workshop, participants were given the opportunity to share their problems and desires with others. There, I learned that having diverse perspectives on things is very important for problem solving. Before attending this workshop, I had no goals and mostly worked passively. However, after attending this workshop, I feel that I have been able to set goals that match what I need to do and what I want to achieve, and I am now able to tackle things proactively.

The second idea was the importance of actively communicating with others. The catalyst for this is that through the LD30 conference as a whole, I was able to talk not only with Japanese nationals

but also with people from overseas and people of the same generation from other universities. It was through these conversations I was able to gain perspectives and knowledge that I did not have before.

In response to the conference, I would like to discuss future goals and actions. My goal for the future is to broaden my perspective. Specifically, I would like to be conscious of eliminating preconceptions about things and avoiding prejudice and become more accepting of diverse values. As a concrete action, I would like to communicate more actively. This is because I believe that by talking with others, I can gain more knowledge and use that knowledge to broaden my perspective. I would like to work in a welfare-related job in the future, and I believe that I will be involved with people from all walks of life. Therefore, I believe that this broad perspective will help me to empathise with the values and lifestyles of people in various positions and to find solutions that are tailored to each individual. Before participating in this conference, I had not been a proactive learner, but joining the poster presentations by fellow university students, I was inspired by the fact that they had more knowledge than I did, and it made me want to learn more, not only about English, but also other fields of knowledge. This was my first time to participate in such a conference and I was very nervous, but it was a very good experience to increase my motivation for learning.

My hope is that this reflection will encourage readers to think about the prejudices they unconsciously hold and how to eliminate them once they become aware of them.

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Excitement and Surprise: My First Experience at the LD30 Conference

Joining the LD30 Conference was my first experience of being in an English speaking environment outside the classroom. Also, it was my first time attending a conference. First of all, when I first heard the slide show presentation, it was refreshing to see the presenters and all the listeners speaking English, and I was overwhelmed by the sight of them communicating in English as if it were normal. However, I was disappointed by my lack of English skills compared to the environment around me, and I once again felt the difference between me and the people around me.

Next, we participated in a student poster session. It was exciting to see people close to my age interacting with foreign teachers fluently in English. Listening to each session and coming up with questions about it was more difficult than I expected, and at first I was doing my best just listening and understanding what was written on the posters. However, I thought that I needed to communicate in some way, so I started by asking them in Japanese, “What is the content of this part of the poster?” After that, I was able to listen to it in English and ask various questions, such as why they decided to think about this topic. Although it was still difficult to communicate in English, it was a good experience for me to be able to discuss the English poster with students from other universities. Also, the posters were designed in various ways, such as using graphs and tables and making the text easier to read, and I felt that there were many things to learn other than English. I enjoyed Miki’s poster presentation, ‘‘Young people with no place to stay’’ the most. I was impressed that she presented social issues concerning young people in Japan. I would like to try the poster session next year, so I felt that I would like to use this poster session as a reference.

Finally, we participated in a story circle. I was trying my best to understand the contents of the slides written in English about ‘‘linguistic identity,’’ and when I was exchanging opinions, I was frustrated that I could only speak in Japanese while everyone else was speaking in English. However, I felt very happy that we were able to exchange and share opinions.

The reason why I joined LD30 was that I’m not good at English so I wanted to be in an English environment. This time I took action for change by joining LD30. I felt that the opportunity to exchange opinions with students other than myself was very important, and it was a valuable experience. Also, I am now able to talk more actively than before in English. Next, I would like to give my own presentation, which is my next step next year.

LEARNER DEVELOPMENT SIG

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学習者ディベロプメント研究部会

対話と実践者研究による学習者の実践と学習者中心の教育法の探求

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