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Personal Goal Setting and Support for English Language Learning: Case Studies of First-Year University Students

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the new norm in education and a wide variety of learning styles have been introduced in the classroom, such as online, hybrid and on-demand. Regardless of subjects, both learners and teachers are exposed to new forms of learning and are also required to adapt to new teaching and learning styles. However, the essence of education remains the same in any learning environment, and learners are expected to engage in their own learning autonomously and teachers provide the necessary support for the development of learner autonomy .

Since the reorganization of the curriculum in 2020, Seikei University in Tokyo has also placed emphasis on active learning in the interdepartmental English curriculum. As one of the members of the English Program Committee, I have been involved in curriculum planning with four other faculty members from different departments for several years. After deep and careful consideration regarding the new curriculum, we decided to provide a variety of elective courses so that students could voluntarily choose courses that fit their needs and interests. One of the most striking features of the new curriculum is the introduction of a new course, "Self-Designed English Learning," which aims to foster the development of learner autonomy. This paper provides an overview of this course and analyzes the goal setting of two first-year university students in terms of goal-setting theory (Locke, 1969; Locke & Latham, 1984), clarifying its characteristics and discussing the nature of necessary support.

SELF-DESIGNED ENGLISH LEARNING

A new elective course, "Self-Designed English Learning," was introduced in 2020. From 2014 to 2019, the university had offered "Freshers' English (FE)," which was a compulsory course for first-year students across departments. All the students took FE during the first semester of their first year. Although other one-year compulsory courses mainly aimed to improve skills and strategies in the four English language skills, FE was designed to shift away from students' thinking of exam-conscious learning methods, make them think about the world and the possibilities they will have if they can use English, and reaffirm the significance and fun of learning English. More importantly, FE also aimed to foster the development of learner autonomy by exposing students to a variety of English learning methods so that each student could find a learning method suited to his or her own needs and learn how to study on his or her own.

However, with the reorganization of the curriculum in 2020, FE was discontinued due to the need to coordinate with other compulsory courses, and "Self-Designed English Learning" was introduced as an elective course for first-year students and above. In designing the new course, the syllabus of FE was carefully reexamined together with the results of studies I and a colleague had conducted in the previous 2 years (e.g., Hayashi, 2018; Hayashi and Banno, 2018; Hayashi, 2020). In FE, while incorporating a lot of pair and group work, the content included introducing Western music and movies and writing letters in English, with more emphasis on making students feel the joy of English and developing interest and enthusiasm for English, However,the content of "Self-Designed English Learning"was more English-learning-oriented, while retaining the collaborative element. Moreover,

an official visit was made to the University of Helsinki in Finland in September 2019. The University of Helsinki has provided autonomous learning modules for many years, and class observation and meetings with the curriculum directors were used as additional resources to design the course specifically to meet the needs and proficiency of our students.

DEFINITIONS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

Learner autonomy has been defined in various ways. Holec (1981, p.3) defines learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." More specifically, he explains that learners determine the objectives, define the contents, select methods and techniques to be used; monitor the procedure of acquisition; and evaluate what has been acquired. Learners take responsibility for their own learning as they are actively involved in the whole process of learning.

Moreover, Kojima (2007, p. 176) defines learner autonomy as follows:

> The willingness and ability of learners to take responsibility for their own language learning according to their stage of development, to be as actively involved as possible in the decision-making and process of learning content and methods, and to independently sustain and develop their own language learning while reflecting on and evaluating the effects of their learning. It is necessary to foster individual autonomy while sharing common goals and objectives so that they can collaborate with others. (translated in English by the author)

This definition emphasizes individual differences in autonomy and states that even the same learner has different levels of autonomy at different developmental stages. Moreover, autonomy includes not only personal and psychological but also social aspects, pointing out the need to cultivate learner autonomy through mutual learning among learners. This definition is in line with my educational philosophy, and "Self-Designed English Learning" aims to foster the development of learner autonomy through collaboration between students and teacher and among students in class.

GOAL SETTING THEORY

Goal setting theory focuses on the effects of goal setting on motivation and states that goal setting influences motivation (Locke, 1969). Appropriate and specific goal setting is desirable, and Locke and Latham (1984, pp. 27-37) provide the following seven steps for effective goal setting:

1. Specify the general objective or tasks to be done
2. Specify how the performance in question will be measured
3. Specify the standard or target to be reached
4. Specify the time span involved
5. Prioritize goals
6. Rate goals as to difficulty and importance
7. Determine coordination requirements

These steps were integrated into the goal-setting process for English language learning in the new Self-Designed English learning course with the expectation of enhancing students' motivation and performance. Moreover, subsequent individual meetings were also conducted with students with reference to the seven steps.

SYLLABUS

When the course was introduced in 2020 for the first time, it attracted approximately 150 students although the number of students allowed to take the course was limited to 20. In order to maintain equality, students are automatically selected by the Academic Affairs Division. The number of students who desire to take the course has been unchanged since then, and the course meets the needs of

students regardless of department and English proficiency level. Figure 1 is the course description for students.

> What would you like to do with English? What is the best way and schedule for you to achieve your dream? Wouldn't it be great if you could design your own English study plan? This course helps you design your own English study plan.
>
> In this course, you will consider your own English learning goals, try various English learning methods, understand their effectiveness and explore learning methods that suit your own learning style. Each student will set ultrashort-, short-, mid-, and long-term goals, and learn how to review and revise their plans after planning and implementing their own learning according to their achievements. We encourage you to reevaluate your current learning style and consider a more effective way to become a "successful English learner." We encourage you to take this course if you have something you would love to do if you have sufficient English skills or if you just want to improve your English skills. The road to achieving your English learning goals may not be easy, but the instructor in this course will accompany and support you.

Figure 1: Course Description of Self-Designed English Learning

COURSE CONTENTS AND FORMAT

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, "Self-Designed English Learning" was introduced online in 2020. In my university, all the English classes were conducted online during the 2020 and 2021 academic years; however, the classes have been entirely face-to-face from the 2022 academic year onward. I had been on leave from 2022-2023, so it was 2024 that II first teaught "Self-Designed English Learning" face-to-face. A total of 14 simultaneous interactive online classes (100 minutes each) were held on Zoom in the 2020 and 2021. Pair and group work was conducted in almost every class, utilizing the breakout room function, and efforts were made to ensure as many opportunities as possible for students to collaborate with each other. In order to promote "reflective dialogue" (Kato and Mynard, 2016), an individual meeting was conducted once per student (about 30 minutes) during the semester mainly to discuss each student's learning goals and learning plan. Because of time constraints, some students had meetings outside of class.

Table 1: Course Contents

Week	Contents
1	Orientation / English and Myself #1
2	Overview of English Courses at Seikei University / English and Myself #2
3	Introduction to "Seikei Extensive Reading" / English and Myself #3
4	Introduction to American and British English/ English learning resources, etc.
5	Study abroad (1): Introduction of Seikei's study abroad program
6	Study abroad (2): Experiences of study abroad by senior students
7	What is a "Good Language Learner"?
8	Four-year course and study plan / Shadowing / Individual meetings (1)
9	Identify your English learning style / Individual meetings (2)
10	Learning methods that suit different English learning styles
11	Reading Tips: Improve your speed-reading skills
12	Effective vocabulary study methods / Individual meetings (3)
13	Motivation for learning English
14	Work and English / Review and revise your English learning goals and plan

Table 1 shows the course contents. "English and Myself" included in the first three lessons is closely related to goal setting. By answering some questions, students are inductively guided to consider the

relationship between English and themselves and consider their goals for English language learning inductively (See the section on Goal Setting Procedure for details). Likewise, sessions on English learning styles were included in Week 9 and 10 to understand which learning styles students prefer and which they do not. Using the perceptual learning style preference questionnaire (Reid, 1984), students confirm their learning style preferences in terms of the six learning styles: auditory, tactile, visual, kinesthetic, individual, and group. Students are even encouraged to come up with some learning methods that suit different English learning styles.

PARTICIPANTS

When the first year of the course opened in the 2020 academic year, a total of 20 first-year students (7 male and 13 female) from four faculties (Economics, Law, Humanities and Business Administration) took the course. The students' English proficiency varied, ranging from TOEIC 300 to 600. Using purposive sampling, this study focuses on two students: Kaori and Fumio (both are pseudonyms). Kaori majors in American and British literature, and her TOEIC score is 400, while Fumio's major is law and his TOEIC score is 600. With written consent from both Kaori and Fumio, data were gathered through individual meetings and written documents by the two students in Japanese and translated into English by the author.

GOAL-SETTING PROCEDURE

In the first lesson, the students were asked to answer the following five questions (See Week 1 "English and Myself #1" in Table 1).

> 1-1) Have you been abroad? If yes, when and where?
>
> 1-2) How long have you studied English?
>
> 1-3) How have you studied English?
>
> 1-4) How would you compare English to animals?
>
> 1-5) What would you like to do with English?

Through this list of questions I intended to understand each student's English learning experience from various perspectives. Among the five questions, question (1-4) helped me understand each student's image of English by comparing English to animals. In alignment with Bobek and Tversky (2016), who point out the importance of visual explanation, the students were allowed to express themselves with pictures if they wished, and the animals that students described were analyzed with reference to Di Leo (1970) and Machover (1949). The final question (1-5) was related to the setting of English learning goals. Looking back on my past experiences, many students were puzzled and thought over when I asked them to set learning goals, so I did not use the word "goal" but asked them what they would like to do using English. This was done to make the students think of English as something familiar to them and then link it to goal setting. (See Hayashi (2018) for details on the purpose and intent of each question).

In the second class, further reflection was encouraged by having students answer the following questions (See Week 2: "English and Myself #2" in Table 1).

> 2-1) As for the question (1-5), what triggered you to think that way?
>
> 2-2) What do you think would be necessary to achieve this?
>
> 2-3) What are you currently doing to achieve this?
>
> 2-4) Are there any things you are trying to start to achieve this?

Students reflected on their English learning and reexamined the reasons and experiences behind their goal setting. Moreover, they were asked about what they needed to do to achieve their goals as well as their current and future study plans. They were given opportunities to think deeply about

the relationship between English and themselves so that their goals would not be unrealistic or tokenistic.

In the third lesson (See Week 3: "English and Myself #3" in Table 1), focusing on Locke and Latham's (1984) Step 1 (specify the general objective or tasks to be done) and Step 4 (specify the time span involved), the students were asked to set their own long-, mid-, short- and ultrashort-term goals as in Figure 2.

■Long-term goal:
   (*See the question (1-5). You have already answered this question in the first lesson.)

■What do you think you need to do to achieve your long-term goal?
   (See the question (2-2). You have already answered this question in the second lesson.)

■Mid-term goal (by the end of the third year)

■Short-term goal (by the end of the second year)

■Ultrashort-term goal (by the end of the first semester)

Figure 2: Worksheet for Goal Setting

It should be noted that the term "long-term goal" is used here for the first time. However, it was explicitly explained that it is related to the answers in question (1-5). Moreover, the meaning of "long-term goal" varied for each student. For example, some students considered it to mean the end of their university years, while others, especially fourth-year students, tended to look to the future after graduation Thus, the definition of each student's "long-term goal" was valued instead of setting the exact same period. Another parallel question was regarding the necessary skills to achieve the goal, which was equivalent to question (2-2). Thus, inductive and step-by-step goal setting was emphasized by setting a time frame for each goal and having students think about their own goals for achievement.

CASE STUDIES

CASE 1: KAORI'S GOAL SETTING

Her long-term goal was "to be able to watch foreign movies without subtitles" (See Figure 3). Her goal seemed to be somewhat deficient and lacks future-oriented perspectives, but it would have been because of the learning context in which she was at that time. In 2020, all the classes were conducted online and she was obliged to spend the most time taking classes. Regardless of whether her goal is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic or not, it was clear that she considerd

her goal not personal but relative, given her statement that "I will study English more than others." She did not fully reflect on herself including any specific skills that she would need to achieve her goal. Like her long-term goal, the other three goals also related to her study habits and attitudes toward taking the TOEIC test. In particular, her ultrashort-term goal was simply written "to surpass 10,000 words," which was very vague and unclear as to what it specifically refered to. There was a tendency for her to shift away from exam-oriented English and toward communicative English, but her long-term goal was not sufficiently related to her mid-, short-, and ultrashort-term goals, and she was not able to break them down step-by-step into specific communication-oriented goals.

■Long-term goal:
- To be able to watch foreign movies without subtitles.

■What do you think you need to do to achieve your goal?
- I will study English more than others.

■Mid-term goal:
- I will have a habit of reading English books.

■Short-term goal:
- I look forward to taking the TOEIC.

■Ultrashort-term goal:
- To surpass 10,000 words.

Figure 3: Kaori's Goals

REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE WITH KAORI

During the course, I was able to engage in a reflective conversation with Kaori. First of all, we talked about the relationship among the four goals for consistency and considered how she could write her goals in the form of "I will be able to do" in order to make it easier to understand and more concrete. With reference to Rocke and Latham's (1984) Step 3 (specify the standard or target to be reached), she was also asked to clarify what "10,000 words" meant in her ultrashort-term goal. Through talking with her, it was found that she would like to include extensive reading as her out-of-class learning method. Then, we discussed whether it would be better to indicate a specific number, such as "reading 100 words per day," "1,000 words per week," or "4,000 words per month." In this way, the dialogue enabled us to clarify the target that she should aim for so that she can check if she achieves the goal.

Another issue is a TOEIC score that Kaori included in her short-term goal. As in Rocke and Latham's (1984) Step 2 (specify how the performance in question will be measured), she was recommended to set specific scores in a step-by-step manner. In addition, given her long-term goal, some websites exclusively for English language learners, such as BBC and "Voice of America" were introduced to enhance her listening skills together with some online English tests like Computerized Assessment System for English Communication (CASEC) and Telephone Standard Speaking Test (TSST) as a means of measuring her communicative skills.

Moreover, Kaori's short-term goal was closely related to her affective aspects of English language learning. She includes TOEIC as a measure of her English proficiency. However, her statement that "I look forward to taking the TOEIC" implies her mixed feelings that TOEIC is something that she considers she has to take but does not want to if possible were well reflected in her goal. Like Kaori, those who are not good at English seemed to put more focus on the affective side and

needed the support of balanced goal setting by adding language goals in addition to affective ones. Thus, it would be desirable to encourage students to include both affective and language-focused goals with necessary guidance.

CASE 2: FUMIO'S GOAL SETTING

Even though students were not allowed to study abroad in the 2020 academic year, Fumio's long-term goal was to study abroad, and he specifically described the skills that he needs to achieve this goal (See Figure 4). His strong determination was well reflected in the long-term goal and the remaining three goals were not only more consistent than Kaori's but also more specific and detailed, with three to four sub-goals added to each goal. For the short-term goal, he chose TOEIC as a means of measuring his English proficiency and set a specific numerical score (+500 points) based on his current score. Moreover, he added listening comprehension of foreign films to the goal based on his self-analysis of his current listening ability. However, the ultrashort-term goals were vague and lack specificity.

> ■Long-term goal:
> - Study abroad for a year or six months.
>
> ■What do you think you need to do to achieve your goal?
> - I would like to strengthen my knowledge of grammar and use it in my speaking as much as possible so that I can improve my English more smoothly when I go abroad to study.
>
> ■Mid-term goal:
> - To achieve +100 points in TOEIC held every December.
> - To complete "Target 1,900" (a vocabulary book) and to be able to work on a vocabulary book that is one level higher.
> - To complete "Target 1,900" and work on a vocabulary book that is one level higher in the second year.
> - To fill in all the boxes in the record of multiple readings in TOEIC.
>
> ■Short-term goal:
> - To complete "Target 1,900."
> - To get +500 points in TOEIC in December.
> - To be able to understand the dialogues of foreign movies better than before.
>   (I can understand the words when the subtitles are shown.)
>
> ■Ultrashort-term goal:
> - To be able to understand the words when they are presented.
> - To read through all pages of the textbooks used in English classes.
> - To read as much as possible.

Figure 3: Fumio's Goals

REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE WITH FUMIO

I suggested to Fumio that his ultrashort-term goals be organized in the same way as the other goals in an easy-to-understand manner. Also, as mentioned above, since each goal had three to four sub-goals, he was encouraged to prioritize the goals, given the difficulty level of the goals, by following Rocke and Latham's (1984) Step 5 (prioritize goals) and Step 6 (rate goals as to difficulty and importance).

In addition, we discussed the English skills necessary for studying abroad. Fumio clearly states that his long-term goal was to study abroad for a year or six months; however, he did not refer to his

English language skills as necessary for communication. Then he was asked how he would be able to improve his communication skills in English. Specifically, a concrete example was provided that since Japan is an English as a Foreign Language environment, it would be difficult to get exposure to English in daily life unless he creates opportunities to speak and use English. As for sharing ideas for output opportunities in English, we also confirmed that either a TOEFL or IELTS score is required for studying abroad in English-speaking countries for mid-term or longer programs.

Moreover, an issue on English proficiency tests was included. Given the shift in Fumio's interest from "exam-oriented English" to "English for communication," CASEC and TSST were introduced to measure the communicative English or speaking ability necessary for oral communication. By introducing these tests, it was expected that he would set his own goals with an awareness of Rocke and Latham's (1984) Step 2 (specify how performance and results will be measured). Fumio was also told to check the indicators that subdivide the level of English proficiency to understand what one can do at each level in a step-by-step manner and refer to them when revising his goals.

At the university, TOEIC-IP is used as a placement and exit test and students are encouraged to consider TOEIC scores results only as an indication of their English proficiency. However, given the fact that many students included TOEIC scores in their goals at the early stage of their university life, TOEIC has been a major measure for university students to check their progress. Then, it would be interesting to have students think about what exactly they are able to do in English with a TOEIC score of 730, for example. In this way, students would be able to deepen their understanding of the relationship between the TOEIC score and the specific skills that they actually have in English. It will also be helpful to provide opportunities for students to discuss the criteria and definition of what they consider to be a "good score" to clarify their learning goals.

DISCUSSION

Throughout the whole process of goal setting, the students as English language learners reflected on their English learning both in and out-of-class settings. The process-oriented procedure enabled each student to understand their English learning style preferences. Moreover, the strengths and weaknesses as English language learners were identified by comparing themselves with the characteristics of "good language learners," which helped students establish what their normal learning behaviors were and their desired behavior change while raising awareness of themselves not only as English learners but also as English users.

In order to see changes in students' perceptions and attitudes toward English learning, the learning outcomes were visually measured by using an original sheet which includes the following eight course objectives:

1. To understand the English courses available during the four years of study at Seikei University;
2. To be able to set goals for your own English study;
3. To be able to plan your own English study plan;
4. To understand various English learning methods and their effects;
5. To be able to find and practice English learning methods suitable for yourself;
6. To understand the English learning resources available on campus (English Chat Time, library reading corner, online reading books, study abroad programs, etc.) and incorporate them into your study plan as needed;
7. To understand what you need to do to achieve your goals (skills, materials, environment, etc.) and continue your learning by modifying their study plan as necessary;
8. To understand how to continue your own English study.

These achievement goals were used as the can-do statement for this course, and students were asked to self-evaluate their current level of ability on a four-point Likert scale during the first class. Similarly, at the end of the course, the degree to which they had achieved the measurable learning outcomes was reflected on and evaluated by the students. Students could visually monitor their own progress, and the results were used as part of assessment criteria.

Although individual differences were emphasized throughout the course, the case studies revealed some features commonly observed among students with varying proficiency levels in terms of course expectations. For instance, beginner students like Kaori tended to be narrow-focused and affective-oriented especially in setting their own goals and needed help in finding suitable English learning methods for themselves. A lack of confidence in English might have been related to inflexible use of various English learning methods and more guided support was necessary for students to achieve the course objectives. On the other hand, risk-taking was one of the features of intermediate students including Fumio. They were eager to try new learning methods and incorporated them into their own learning more easily, which would be one of the important factors of continuous learning.

Regardless of the differences in proficiency, the students went through the process of the development of learner autonomy as they engaged in the goal setting in the course. Each student took responsibility for their own learning, determined their learning objectives, defined learning content and progression, selected methods and techniques, monitored the procedure of acquisition and evaluated what had been acquired as they established and modified their original and personal English learning. The whole process was self-directed with the necessary guidance, and the students were proactively engaged in designing their own learning while enhancing awareness of themselves as English language learners and users.

CONCLUSION

The "Self-Designed English Learning" course, which was designed for the development of learner autonomy, guides students to set their own goals for English language learning in an inductive and personal way. The course was conducted online for the first year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and there were various constraints that both teachers and students faced and overcame. In particular, the pandemic affected first-year students' motivation and future prospects to a greater or lesser extent. Although the influence of the pandemic was seen in goal setting, through the case studies of the two students, it was found that the students' goals for learning English have shifted from studying English for entrance examinations to communicative English, but this shift was not well reflected in each goal, and there were some discrepancies among the goals. However, the subsequent reflective dialogue they had with me encouraged the students to consider the goals more concretely and specifically; they could engage in adjusting their own goals for consistency. Furthermore, the one-on-one reflective dialogue with each student enabled me to fully understand each student's level, needs, and interests, so that the students could explore personalized paths with my assistance and support.

It was the first semester of the 2024 academic year that I had the "Self-Designed English Learning" course face-to-face for the first time since I had been on leave for about two years. The course followed almost the same procedure as the online one; however, reflecting on the first semester, there were times when I was puzzled by the differences from the online classes. Some of the activities were more smoothly and interactively conducted online, while face-to-face classes allowed for improvisation and interaction with different members by changing pairs/groups, which enabled the instructor to intervene and provide appropriate scaffolding if necessary. A comparison between online and face-to-face classes and the dilemmas of the instructor in charge of the course is in the analysis stage and the results will be reported at another time.

For future practice and research, it would be interesting to focus on students' perceptions of goal setting and clarify the problems and difficulties they have. It is highly possible that students' interests

and concerns may change after setting initial goals and that their priorities and goals themselves may change accordingly. Then, how their interests are reflected in their goals and even affect the dynamic change of goal setting would be interesting to explore. Moreover, it would be useful to identify characteristics of goal setting based on students' English proficiency levels in order to provide appropriate guidance and support. This study provides some insights into goal-setting features related to English proficiency levels, but it focuses only on two students, and the results cannot be generalized. A further study especially on reflective dialogue between students and instructors will reveal some specific characteristics based on the English proficiency levels and help explore effective scaffolding for goal setting and approaches to nurture learners' autonomous growth.

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Generation Z Dreamers and their Thoughts about SDGs

PART I: INTRODUCTION

I became interested in teaching SDGs because of the growing interest in the topic among students at university, especially after the pandemic hit. Here is an extract from what one of my students wrote about SDGs.

> SDGs are a world issue that is closest to us right now. I learned about the SDGs in class in junior high school and became interested in them, so I researched them further. When I researched them, I realized that there is a deep connection between Japan and other countries

My first motivation **f**or teaching SDGs is for students to realize that Japan is connected to the rest of the world.

As you are no doubt aware, in recent years, there has been an enormous upsurge in interest in SDGs in Japanese schools and universities. According to Recruit College Management, a corporation that analyzes the trends of current higher education in Japan, in 2023, as many as 74.6% of high school students in Japan have been aware of and have had an interest in SDGs (*Recruit College Management-Daigaku ni Totte no SDGs* vol. 236, p. 5). And in order to tackle the recent decrease in university applicants, schools are being forced to make themselves more attractive to students by promoting teaching and learning about SDGs. My second rationale for teaching SDGs and for selecting a textbook that focuses solely on SDGs is that students do not feel that there is a connection between what is taught in the classroom, or "ivory tower" in some academic fields, and what students are taught as "shinnyushain" (freshmen), once they enter the corporate world. Thirdly, teaching SDGs is related to internationalizing the higher education sector. Most of the issues we face in the world are connected to SDGs. For example, climate havens don't exist anywhere, as shown in the recent example of the heavy rainfall in Noto, Japan and Hurricane Milton in the U.S. To be aware of an SDG (e.g., SDG 13 , Climate action) shows that these seemingly independent events are closely related. Similarly, for societies and economies to adapt and recover from the recent pandemic showed us that all the SDGs are interconnected, and that one SDG cannot be achieved without the other.

PART I: MY PLAN FOR THE COURSE

In this article, I report on the work that my college students did in the fall semester last year, in 2023/2024.I discuss which SDGs they chose to study and how the project moved the students beyond the regular exercises in class.

I introduced SDGs in my Kokusai Eigo IIIB class at an all women's college in Tokyo. The other Kokusai Eigo classes do not necessarily study SDGs as content; rather, a compilation of news articles from sources such as CNN are usually selected. Furthermore, the textbook, <u>AFP World News Report 5: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</u>, was published in the year 2020, so it at first seemed a bit outdated. However, I chose this textbook firstly because after experiencing the global pandemic, we learned that environmental issues are important, and that the other SDGs, such as poverty, have become a growing issue after the pandemic, as many industries closed down and people were laid off. Secondly, the AFP series of textbooks are well-balanced in that

the articles come from all over the world, from Pakistan, South Africa, the U.K., and Myanmar, and not only from U.S. news sources. The students' initial reaction was whether the content would be difficult, but they seemed relieved when I said that I would give them a Japanese translation of the article that they studied each week, and when I told them they could review the grammar and vocabulary as extra points using the online site called Linguaporta attached to this content. The textbook is written in simple to intermediate English, and there are reading passages modified from the previously mentioned archive, as well as listening, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension exercises. Each lesson, from 1 to 16 in this particular textbook deals with one of the SDGs. For some reason, there is no lesson in the textbook that deals with SDG 17, "Partnerships for the Goals".

PART II: WHAT THE STUDENTS DID IN CLASS

My Kokusai Eigo IIIB class contained 23 students. Each student individually wrote a script, made a PowerPoint presentation about one SDG, and wrote about the same SDG topic on the final examination. The college students were asked to do presentations of 2 to 5 minutes on one SDG, and they were timed with a stopwatch. Then, they were asked to tie their selected SDG with one of the interviewees, or "dreamers"' in a bestseller called _We Have a Dream: 201 Countries 201 Dreams with Sustainable Development Goals_. This book, published when the pandemic hit, is a compilation of essays by young people worldwide who were interviewed about their dreams. The book has received high praise from Muhammad Yunus, the father of microfinance and a Nobel Peace Prize Winner. "What can the Millennial and Generation Z Dreamers teach us through their dreams?" it says on the book cover. A Japanese celebrity Ai, says the following on the back flap of the book:

> A world where everyone can dream! So awesome! And getting to know each other and help[ing] each other? That's awesome too! I feel as if this book can connect us all, from each dreamer in the book to each of you reading, and maybe even help heal the scars in our society

After students selected an SDG topic they wanted to present, I gave them extracts from this book; they selected the "young dreamer" and tied it in with their presentations. Choosing a celebrity and making a connection with an interviewee belonging to the same generation as the college students has made the SDG more personal.

The book was not used as a course textbook. The students subsequently wrote about what they wanted to present, the SDG they chose and their rationale for choosing the SDG on their final exam. The students were allowed to have a script when they gave their presentations. Each student came to the front of the room in the computer lab, where we usually conduct class. In the week prior to their presentations (this class meets once a week), they shared their presentation ideas in pairs or small groups.

For the final exam, the students had time to prepare beforehand, though it was not an open-book test. They could also add a Japanese translation to their paragraphs or essay. I wanted to see if they could turn the spoken English of their presentations into written form, and whether they had internalized their topic and made it their own. Below is a sample of what one student wrote in the final test. Grammar mistakes are kept in their original forms.

> Poor country has the Gender problem. The most problem is women right. Poor country women is low education late. Women can't work company because They have no education background and busy housework. Rich country women is rate that participate in the government. It is solved the child support problem and gender problem. and more, poor country need to rethink the human right. If they study human right more, they can understand women right. In addition, women need to be job support. Women is so busy for housework and child care. So women job support is

very help women....I need to more study about Gender problem. I wish rethink women right all over the world.

(E. H.)

As the example shows,though there are grammatical errors in the use of articles, and while there are word choice and spelling errors, the paragraph is rich in content.

## PART III: WHAT I DISCOVERED THROUGH TEACHING SDGS

While all the SDG topics were popular, more students showed a keen interest in SDG1: No Poverty and SDG5: Gender Equality. Below is a brief analysis of why they chose these two topics.

I thought that the students would be choosing Climate Change as the SDG that they were most concerned with due to the extreme weather every year in Japan with its torrential rain, floods and heat, but this was not the case. Something related to disaster relief is another area I thought they would choose. However, they showed little interest in this SDG either. One reason why there was a higher concern for gender issues may be that students at this women's college take classes in Development Economics and Gender studies. Many women's colleges are going co-ed, for market attraction and to cope with the changes in society, but my university has decided to continue being an all women's college. However, they have added these courses to make the university more attractive and are promoting "Women in Leadership" in Japan, which is known to have a workforce stratified by gender.

One theory why there was a higher concern for gender issues may be due to the reality of the pandemic. Online classes compensated for school closures to some extent, but many people in some sectors lost their jobs. Hence, female students may be more aware of the limitations of the job market.

Secondly, more students at the higher level of education in Japan are on student loans and scholarships. Financial issues, like gender issues, are imminent, practical issues that students face when studying and joining the workforce.

Whatever the reasons for their choices, the use of SDGs in this content-based class has added a new dimension for the students and myself. First, students were able to express themselves visually and in writing by selecting an SDG of their choice. They could also read about/ tie in their SDG with young people on the other side of the globe, concerned with the same particular SDG through the book _We Have a Dream: 201 Countries 201 Dreams with Sustainable Development Goals_. I could see the students as individuals with their own opinions, rather than ranking them according to their English test scores. Many students seemed to realize that education is essential. They realized the gap between nations, poverty, and the lack of education are connected. Furthermore, teaching an SDGs textbook is different from teaching a regular reading textbook with grammar exercises or a current events textbook. This is because the SDGs make us aware that there are real issues that need to be solved. The results showing that students had a higher interest in SDG1 and SDG5 shows that it is difficult to make SDGs our own, or to take **ownership** of the problem. SDGs like Climate Change are difficult to acknowledge unless it
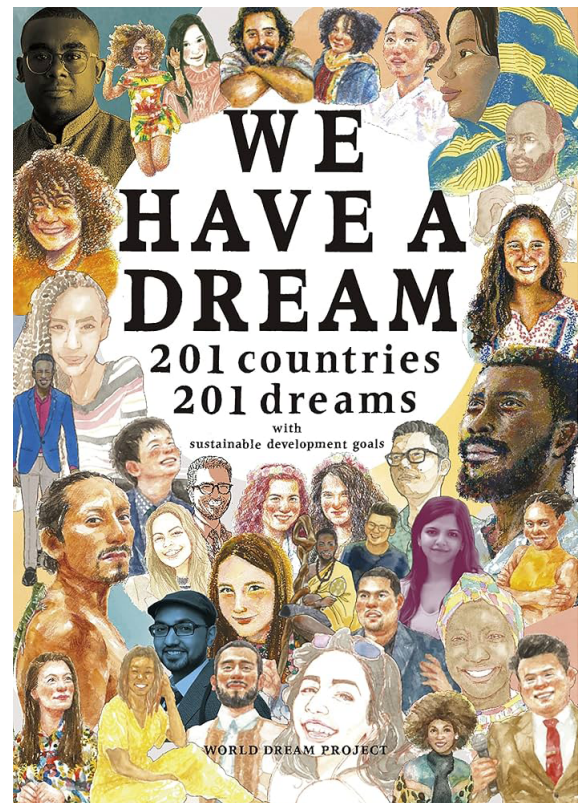
happens to your home town, unlike getting cancer, which is a more personal problem that one has to tackle with. The university students chose the more imminent, realistic problems they are facing like poverty and gender, rather than the other SDGs.

PART III: FINAL REFLECTIONS

Some limitations of this project are that though students were able to express their thoughts in an autonomous fashion, they continued to make mistakes in basic sentence patterns (5 *bun kei*) and SVOC (Subject-Verb-Object-Complement). Students may feel that this project will not directly enhance their test-taking skills. In order to change this, in the future if I teach this course again, I could ask students to rewrite their exam paragraphs using a coded error system. Furthermore, with the PowerPoint presentations, I could have either forced the students to memorize their scripts and only allowed key words with a word count limitation as notes, introducing useful words and phrases, such as "Today, I will lead a discussion on… and "My discussion topic is". That way, the presentations would have been more natural. However, despite these limitations, focusing on real content like SDGs has added value to my class, since students will be facing "real issues" once they go out into the "real" world. SDGs are real issues that all graduates, regardless of which career path they choose to take, will have to face.

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Book Review: *Designing Learning for Multimodal Literacy: Teaching Viewing and Representing*
Lim, F. V., & Tan-Chia, L. (2023). Routledge.

As an EFL educator who works with secondary school age children, the past few years since the epidemic has seen screen time ever more present with student exposure to tablets, computers, and the internet on a daily basis in my classroom. Short form video content, SNS, and imagery have been sought after by my students during classroom time and to accommodate such demand, I've incorporated multimodal content into my lesson plans to engage and increase motivation with my learners.

For example, for English conversation lessons conducted via webcam in the Philippines, there has been a necessity to teach internet jargon such as "image" vs "picture," and "fresh/reload" that would never be taught in a traditional government-provided English textbook such as *New Horizon* or *My Way*.

Including digital narrative presentations introducing certain topics such as Japanese culture, relating viral SNS video trends or images, writing scripts, and recording performances to watch later, multimodal literacy is needed for many aspects of my students' lessons.

Educators and curriculum specialists alike who want to improve their multimodal literacy development into their classroom will look forward to and resonate with *Designing Learning with Multimodal LIteracy: Teaching Viewing and Representing* created based in theory and practice based research. The text gave me many ideas to personally use in my own classroom and opened my eyes into new ways to create projects that differ from a content-based textbook lesson.

Authors Lim and Tan-chia advocate for a reform in today's post-21st century EFL curriculum to include modern multimodal competencies explored in their book, *Designing Learning for Multimodal Literacy: Teaching Viewing and Representing*. They argue that semiotic meaning making has and is still evolving in today's digital age, multimodal literacy becoming one of the most important goals educators should instill in their students of this generation. Multimodal literacy is defined not only by the many forms of visual, spatial, gestural, spatial, and visual content that teachers can find or produce, but also by the terminology and critical thinking learners can develop as they consume said information. Students being given the tools to identify, create, and express certain concepts

of meaning making in another language is a goal that can be hard to obtain with just grammar and sentence understanding alone. Concepts such as "viewing" and "understanding" are an example of past curriculum competencies that have been introduced for student assessment of interpretation and analysis. With universal design, diversity, and different learner accommodations in mind that we can provide for all students; using and creating different forms of content expression can help bridge the gap for students who are not just audio learners.

Sari defines multimodal literacy as the "knowledge and use of language concerning the visual, gestural, audio and spatial dimensions of communication, including computer-mediated-communication" (Sari, 2023, p. 102). Multimodal literacy is also explained by Kohnke as a means to "freely express their ideas by combining a variety of available resources such as texts, images, hyperlinks, emoticons, drawings, and photographs" (Kohnke et al., 2021). Such literacy leaves students "with an ability to create artefacts through meaning making that will enhance their future literacy and decision making skills (aware of the meaning) in the production of texts...to make apt choices in the representation of knowledge" (O'Halloran & Lim, 2011, p. 17).

Designing Learning for Multimodal Literacy: Teaching Viewing and Representing is a three year collection of heavily theory-based research that incorporates multimodal theoretical language ideas and claims to translate them into pragmatic educational practice. Lim proclaims that whether students succeed in today's classroom depends on teachers, "the designer(s) of learning experiments" and as such, the book goes into explicit detail of multimodal strategies, principles, and three case studies to introduce tools for educators on how to make multimodal literacy succeed (Lim & Tan-Chia, 2023, p. 8).

They continue that for those working in the EFL field, one where students are interacting with print and digital media daily, requires teaching a metalanguage that students are unaware of. As such, educators need to be aware of said vocabulary to help support their student's multimodal literacy. Furthermore, said metalanguage "offers teachers and students the concepts and words to think and talk about the Integral features, ways of Interaction, representation of Ideas and the Interplay of meanings in a multimodal text" (Lim & Tan-Chia, 2023, p. 29).

The book is composed of four parts totaling 8 chapters, each subdivided with an arrangement of excellent clear titles to help lead topic flow such as Chapter 5's "Multimodal Composing," "Knowledges Bases for Digital Multimodal Composing," and "Vignette on Teaching Digital Multimodal Composing." The first chapter introduces the close relationship today's students have with technology and gives a brief overview and history of multimodal literacy, giving examples of the various media it can take the form of and how the later example Singapore multiliteracy projects included positively affect the teaching world.

Chapter 2 then describes the ideas of Professors Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis's pedagogy Learning by Design Framework as well as its learning process, multimodal meaning-making pedagogic metalanguage, and concepts/ideas for teachers to take away with to design with.

Chapter 3-4 establishes the importance of print text, digital text, and how digital media has varying vocabulary and metalanguage that can change based on the means utilized in the classroom. Chapters 4-6 then showcases personally the most pragmatic information for readers to bring back to their classroom; the three Singapore elementary and secondary school multiliteracy projects.

The first case study's theme was "Teaching Multimodal Literacy through Print Texts," incorporating engagement with print advertisements through the multimodal literacy pedagogy tactic of Encountering, Exploring, Evaluating, and Expressing. Students were told to bring their own print advertisements, analyze their features, compare and contrast with pairs, and finally create and present their findings.

The second study's theme was "Digital Multimodal Composing," teaching students how to create food review videos by teaching the needed vocabulary, video direction, style, and English creativity needed to implement multiple uses of media to achieve their final video presentations.

The final vignette topic was "Integrating Language and Multimodal Literacy," having students represent the theme of "conflict" through various media using print and digital titles. Afterwards, meaning making examples and questions were supplied to students for creating a narrative and interpreting the meaning of feelings, role-play, and perspective taking.

Chapter 7 opens with the positives of using competencies in curricula and the role teachers have as the creators of change in the field when it comes to teaching practices and learning outcomes. Lim claims that with their design-based research, teachers can enhance their professional development and help implement theory from paper to classroom. Finally, Chapter 8 ends with the call for change in the teaching curriculum by promoting multimodal literacy advocacy.

One of the most interesting views I have seen from Lim and Tan-chia's research is one of the most rare voices to hear from in case studies; the students. The students used in the experiments had differing final opinions of the experiments. For example, some students learned technology and analysis skills that they might not have realized they were actively using the whole time. On the other hand, one flaw expressed was that the activities were hard to assess and due to the lack of a clear rubric as it is more creativity-based and open.

For policy makers, workshop hosts, and developing curriculum specialists in the EFL field, this design-objective book is a perfect staple for one's professional development. Additionally, from beginner to veteran educators, the three case studies can provide inspiration and new ideas for teacher practitioners to adapt to their classroom due to the fact that students have different relationships and learning stages with technology since childhood. The case studies provided will benefit advanced EFL students the most as they include critical thinking guidelines, instruction techniques, and even varying types of curriculum competencies as well.

A weakness that the book fails to mention beforehand is the targeted classroom audience that the research claims to help. While the synopsis claims vaguely that it will help all kinds of teachers, teachers with beginner, elementary level to early secondary junior high students will have a hard time adapting the content for their lessons due to the high proficiency levels needed for the activities. A location bias could be perceived as the projects are conducted in Singaporean primary/secondary schools, such students can already use highly technical and almost fluent English to articulate their thoughts compared to other East Asian counterpart countries with low English frequency such as Korea or Japan. As such, the book should state from the beginning the intended audience of advanced classrooms as there is no beginner-friendly version as the given content cannot be modified in a way easily digestible for beginner or intermediate ESL learners especially in Japan.

To conclude, the book's multimodal concept is encouraged by the authors to be taught not only in one's native country's language class but in foreign language classes as well. However, while this desire to teach multimodal metalanguage might be heavily pushed by Lim and Tan-Chia, objectively the most interesting final message to take note of from this book was from the case study's sample of students themselves. Their underwhelming feedback is very important for educators reading this book on how to incorporate such thoughts for future multimodal design accommodations such as creating a standardized way of assessment which was not provided in the text.

To use the author's own advice from the very first chapter, if children can only create with what they are given, then the authors should also give readers a more flexible, beginner-friendly approach towards multimodal literacy that's inclusive to all EFL levels. However, Lim's contribution of multimodal metalanguage that isn't usually taught in government practitioner textbooks is a positive addition for EFL educators.

Both curriculum specialists and advanced classrooms can highly benefit from implementing Lim and Tan-chia's research as students wouldn't be able to obtain such formal academic multimodal metalanguage otherwise in today's age of casual language on social media.

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