Identifying Emergent Leaders in Small Groups in the Language Learning Classroom: An Exploratory Study

Paul Leeming
Kindai University

Researchers claim that when students work together in small groups in the language classroom, a single student often emerges as a group leader and that teachers should construct groups based on roles adopted by students. This advice is based on the assumptions that leaders emerge and that teachers can identify leaders in their own classrooms. This paper reports on research that empirically tested these assumptions. Students working in small, fixed groups rated their group members based on perceived leadership. The teacher was responsible for identifying the leader in each group. Individual difference variables of English proficiency, extroversion, and English-speaking self-efficacy (SE) were used to predict emergent leadership. In most groups clear leaders emerged, but the teacher accurately identified the leader in only half of the cases. The findings suggest that teachers should regularly vary group membership and be cautious when assigning roles within groups.

語学の授業において、学生が少人数のグループで活動していると、リーダーが一人現れることがしばしばある、ということが研究者により指摘されている。そして教師は学生それぞれの役割に基づいてグループを作るべきであるという提案がなされている。これは、授業において現れるリーダーを教師は特定できるという想定に基づいている。本稿では、これらの想定を実践的に検証した研究について述べる。固定メンバーの小グループで活動を行う学生たちが、自分の考えるリーダーシップに基づいて自分のグループのメンバーを評価した。また、教師も各グループのリーダーを特定した。グループ内で現れるリーダーを予測するために、英語能力、外向性、英語スピーキングの自己効力感、という個人差が使用された。ほとんどのグループで明確なリーダーが現れたが、教師がそのリーダーを正確に特定できたのは、クラス全体の半分にすぎなかった。検証の結果、グループメンバー

https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJJ43.2-4

JALT Journal, Vol. 43, No. 2, November 2021

を定期的に入れ替えるべきである事と、グループ内で役割を決めるときには十分に注意が必要だと言うことが分かった。

Keywords: emergent leaders; group work; pedagogy; TBLT

Group work has become a mainstay in language teaching and can be clearly seen in the increasing popularity of approaches such as cooperative learning (McCafferty et al., 2006), and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT; Willis & Willis, 2007), which both place a heavy emphasis on the use of groups and interaction. While incorporating group work into the classroom, teachers are faced with several very practical considerations, with perhaps the most important relating to group construction (Leeming, 2014) in which they grapple with several questions. Should students be randomly assigned to groups, grouped by proficiency, personality, or by some other variable such as their role in the class? How can we create effective groups where all students participate? These concerns are real for practicing teachers. Although texts used to train new teachers suggest extensive use of group work (Brown & Lee, 2015; Harmer, 2010), there is limited advice on how to construct groups in the language classroom and a lack of research investigating these practical issues.

Many practicing teachers have observed the phenomenon whereby within small groups, a student emerges to take on the role of leader, dictating the norms for the group, and ultimately determining its success (Forsyth, 2010). Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) argue that these emergent leaders should not be feared as a challenge to authority, but welcomed as essential to the success of a group. Researchers and teacher trainers suggest that emergent leaders can be effectively controlled by giving them specific roles within the group, such as designated timekeeper (McCafferty et al., 2006; Willis & Willis, 2007), and by considering students' personalities when constructing groups (Brown & Lee, 2015). The underlying assumption upon which much of the pedagogical advice is based is that leaders emerge within groups and that teachers can accurately identify these emergent leaders within their own classroom. At present, however, no empirical evidence to support either of these claims exists.

Group Work and Language Learning

Swain's (2005) output hypothesis outlined the functions of speaking, including noticing the gaps in one's own knowledge and testing hypotheses about language when working collaboratively. In addition, Lantolf (2006)

explained, from a sociocultural perspective, how interaction provides opportunities for students to learn from more capable peers within their zone of proximal development. Based on these observations and the general popularity of group work in general education, popular texts used to train new teachers in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) actively encourage the use of group work (Brown & Lee, 2015; Harmer, 2010), and researchers also strongly advocate the benefits of working in small groups (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998). However, potential problems have been associated with small group work, including balance of proficiency and personalities within groups (Brown & Lee, 2015) and domination by a single student, who may emerge to assume a leadership role in the group. This emergent leadership, although largely unexplored in SLA, has been investigated extensively within general psychology. SLA researchers have investigated group work, particularly within the area of interaction, but as acknowledged by Philp et al. (2013), studies have presented only a limited understanding of how group dynamics (including emergent leadership) may impact the interaction in groups.

Emergent Leadership

Leadership is a major area of study for researchers investigating group dynamics (Forsyth, 2010). Formal leaders are appointed to take charge of a group and usually have some official power over other members. However, leaders can also emerge in unofficial roles. It has been found that when groups where no formal roles have been assigned work together on tasks that are interdependent or collaborative, one member usually emerges as unofficial leader within the group and exerts influence over other members through control of group norms (Northouse, 2009). This person is the emergent leader. Although emergent leaders do not have any official role, responsibility, or power, they take charge of the group (Forsyth, 2010). Within general psychology, high levels of emergent leadership have been positively linked to group performance, suggesting that emergent leaders have a beneficial impact on the group (Taggar et al., 1999).

Researchers within SLA have acknowledged the potential importance of students as emergent leaders, but the discussion has been largely theoretical (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998). Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) consider the role of emergent leader to be important, claiming that leaders emerge in most groups and generally exert a positive influence, leading members toward learning goals. Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) argue that the emergent student leader is one of the most important contribu-

tors to the success of the group, organizing and directing other members. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) believe that teachers are able to readily identify the emergent leaders within a group.

> When teachers look carefully in the first few classes, they can often see the unconscious leaders in the room…if teachers are aware of such leaders early on, they can get into a rapport with them and find out what motivates them. (p. 112)

Although teachers may believe they can recognize the leaders in a class, there is no empirical evidence to support this. In fact, at present within SLA, it is a matter of contention whether or not leaders emerge in small groups, or if there is any stability to leadership beyond the implementation of a single task.

Emergent leadership has been identified by many researchers as an important consideration in several empirical studies within SLA. With the exception of Leeming (2019), these researchers did not set out to investigate emergent leadership but retrospectively identified it as a variable influencing group interaction. Storch conducted research into relationships during interaction (Storch, 2002), and Tuan and Storch (2007) were interested in pre-task planning in small groups and its impact on subsequent presentations. Although not an initial consideration, they found that leaders emerged in groups and heavily influenced the ability of the group to plan successfully. In a context very similar to the current study, Yashima et al. (2016) investigated levels of silence in group discussions in the Japanese university classroom. The researchers also found that leaders who emerged in groups controlled the norms of the group in terms of expected behavior and drove the conversations. Leadership was one of the key factors in the success of these interactions in their study. Although these studies concluded that emergent leadership was an important issue for teachers to be aware of, the teacher's ability to accurately identify the leader in small groups was not considered. Leeming (2019) explored the influence of leadership on engagement in conversation and found that more than proficiency or personality, it was levels of leadership that predicted student participation in group tasks. Generally, the research suggests that, following results in general psychology, emergent leaders in the language classroom have a positive impact on group performance (Chemers, 2001).

The importance of being able to accurately identify students' different roles in groups becomes clear when focussing on practical approaches to teaching languages. McCafferty et al. (2006) discuss cooperative learning in the lan-

guage classroom and argue that roles should be assigned to students who are then trained how to effectively accomplish the role. They also contend that the roles in a group should rotate so that each student can develop a range of skills, inferring that roles can be managed and controlled. Willis and Willis (2007) also discuss the importance of assigning roles when students are engaged in group work as part of tasks and suggest that the role of group leader should be assigned to the most talkative member of the group. Brown and Lee (2015) argue that in smaller classes, deliberate group construction is possible and that a list of factors such as personality and proficiency should be considered when assigning students to groups. Dörnyei and Murphey's (2003) book contains a wealth of practical advice for teachers, with one suggestion regarding leadership being encouraging the emergent leader to work with the teacher at times to indirectly influence other students. These concrete suggestions are useful, particularly for new teachers, but assume that student roles in the classroom are easily identifiable.

Predicting Emergent Leadership

Although the ability of teachers to accurately identify emergent leaders is of importance, there are also individual difference (ID) variables such as proficiency or extroversion that may be used to predict emergent leadership. Such an approach might enable teachers to construct groups based on these variables at the start of a course. Although no studies in SLA have considered factors that may lead to individual students becoming the emergent leader in a given group, research in psychology has investigated factors that influence the emergence of leaders (Forsyth, 2010). A number of studies have attempted to determine which ID variables will predict who emerges as leader. Judge et al. (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of studies using the Big Five Model to predict leader emergence and leader effectiveness. They evaluated 78 studies considering personality and leadership and performed a correlation analysis. The analysis showed that all the dimensions of personality were significantly correlated with emergent leadership but that extroversion has the strongest correlation (r = .31), followed by conscientiousness (r = .28), neuroticism (r = .24), and openness to experience (r =.24). Agreeableness, on the other hand, had a weak correlation with leadership (r = .08).

Aside from personality, researchers have considered other traits assumed to predict emergent leaders. Judge et al. (2009) completed a review of the literature considering positive and negative ID variables shown to, or theorized to, correlate with leadership. Intelligence and charisma were among

the positive characteristics they mention, while they identified narcissism, hubris, and dominance among the negative traits. Other factors affecting leadership emergence include task-related skills and experience of group members, which in the current study would relate to English proficiency and experience speaking English. Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's own ability to successfully carry out a given task (Bandura, 1997), could also be expected to relate to leadership, as those with high self-efficacy are more likely to actively participate and persist in a task, even when faced with challenges (Mills, 2014). The level of participation within the group, the gender of members, and even physical appearance, have also been shown to relate to emergent leadership (Forsyth, 2010). Many language teachers I have talked to assume that proficient or outgoing students will take on leadership roles, but again there is a lack of empirical evidence to support this intuition.

Research Questions

Within SLA we have no evidence that students emerge as leaders in groups. Some teachers and researchers may believe that emergent leadership is not relevant to the language classroom, as students work together in a spirit of mutual collaboration, but teachers in compulsory educational settings are familiar with both the benefits and problems of group work, such as dominance by a single student and limited participation from other group members. Although much of the literature on practical teaching discusses deliberate group construction based on roles, we have no evidence relating to the teacher's ability to accurately identify leaders and are unaware of ID variables which may predict leadership in the language classroom. There is also a limited understanding of students' views in this area. If practical advice is to be given to teachers relating to group work and how to deal with students as leaders, it is essential that some understanding of the ability of teachers to identify emergent leaders in group work is clearly established within the SLA field. Hence, this study set out to investigate the following research questions:

RQ1. Do students emerge as leaders in small groups, and if so, to what degree can the teacher accurately identify the emergent leaders?

RQ2. What individual difference (ID) variables predict emergent leadership in the language classroom?

RQ3. What are students' views regarding the importance of leadership in the language classroom?

These questions were answered by placing students into small, fixed groups and then asking them to identify the leader in their group. Students' perceptions of leaders were then compared with the teacher's own views on who was the leader. Individual difference variables were measured and used to predict leadership. Finally, students were interviewed to determine their views on students as leaders in small groups. As no studies within SLA have investigated these questions, this study was exploratory in nature and sought to provide initial insights on which to base future research.

Method

Participants

The research described was part of a larger research project investigating group work in the foreign language classroom. The methodology could be described as mixed-methods concurrent triangulation (Creswell, 2009), where both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered, and comparisons are made. The participants in the study were 78 students (55 male and 23 female) in a first-year compulsory English communication course of a science department at a university in Japan. All classes were taught by the researcher. Classes were 90 minutes once a week, and the age range of students was 18 to 22 (77 first year students and one fourth year student). All participants were native speakers of Japanese. Students were grouped into three classes according to major within the department, not English proficiency. The proficiency level was upper beginner with average TOEIC scores of 390 (CEFR A2), although there was a range of proficiencies within each class. English classes were compulsory, and teachers in this context described student motivation as low. Students wanted to pass the class as it was required for graduation, and therefore attendance was regular.

The data described were gathered during the first semester of the academic year (April-July). First-year classes were selected in an attempt to observe group processes involving students who had limited or no opportunity to interact prior to this study. Discussion with students established that the vast majority of students did not know each other at the outset. In order to comply with the ethical requirements of the institution, the research project was briefly introduced to students, who were given the option of withdrawal from the study at any time and assured that their decision would have no bearing on grades. Students were asked to complete 13 questionnaires during the course of the study, and as much as possible, students were given the surveys at the end of class to minimize the disruption of classroom time.

Classes adopted a TBLT approach (Willis & Willis, 2007), and students were required to work together as a group on tasks. Generally, students were attempting to initiate and maintain simple conversations regarding past experiences, future plans, and simple likes and dislikes. Students demonstrated good receptive knowledge of English but struggled to engage in basic conversation, and therefore tasks were kept simple. Use of the L2 was strongly encouraged throughout, although during regular group discussions students were not penalised for using their L1, which has been shown to have benefits for students in this context (Leeming, 2011). Students predominantly used the L2, particularly when speaking in front of the class. The course and approach to teaching were not modified for this study.

Group Assignment

In the first week students were randomly placed into small groups of three or four people and remained in the same group for the 14-week semester. This reflected normal practices as students typically worked in the same group of three or four members throughout a semester. Each group sat at their own circular table, and most tasks were completed in a groups, with limited intergroup interaction. Students were not officially assigned a role within their group. Each 90-minute class followed a task cycle (Willis, 1996), with a focus on engaging group members through a simple conversation.

Procedures

The General Leadership Impression (GLI) was selected to measure perceived leadership within a group by its members. Developed by Cronshaw and Lord (1987), the GLI is a sociometric measure with which students assess other group members' display of leadership. The GLI has been shown to have high internal consistency and reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .88; Zaccaro et al., 1991). The GLI was adapted for the current study to include explicit references to perceptions of leadership behavior. A final question asking students to make a categorical choice regarding the member of their group they judged to be leader was added to the GLI (see Appendix A). Students could choose anyone in the group and self-select as leader. In addition, there was the option to select no-one, if they felt there was no leader in the group. The GLI was professionally translated into Japanese and was checked by a bilingual researcher familiar with this project. It was piloted with a previous cohort of students (n = 128), and no problems were identified. The

questionnaire was administered three times to track potential changes in perceptions of leadership. This study reports on the first two administrations. The first administration was in week five, to provide time for students to assume roles in the group (Forsyth, 2010). The second administration was in week ten. The data was analysed using FACETS to allow meaningful comparison between raters, and the results were presented in logit scores, ranging from negative (low perceived leadership) to positive (high perceived leadership). In order to provide the overlap in ratings needed in FACETS to allow comparison of ratings, students all watched a video of a discussion involving three teachers trained by the author to represent strong, moderate, and weak leadership and provided ratings of leadership. (A description of FACETS is beyond the scope of this paper, and interested readers are directed to Linacre, 2011.) At the same time as the GLI was administered, based on observation of the class, the researcher as teacher selected a single student from each group whom the teacher considered to be the leader. Judgements were based on a list of prototypical behaviors associated with leadership provided by Lord et al., (1984). These behaviors include co-ordinating the group, providing information emphasising goals and deadlines, and talking frequently. The GLI data were not analyzed or viewed until after the second administration of the GLI in week 10. In order to prepare for interviews, the researcher analyzed the results of the first two GLI administrations before the third administration of the GLI and therefore knew the students' perceptions of leadership, and could not repeat the procedure of identifying leaders for the third administration.

Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM), ID variables were selected to predict emergent leadership as measured by the GLI. The impact of ID variables on emergent leadership was hypothesized to be mediated by the group. For example, the impact of extroversion for an individual student in a group of highly extroverted students is likely to be reduced, and therefore HLM was used, as it allows for the interaction of individual and group level variables (see Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002, for a detailed description of HLM). Given the n-size of the current study, a maximum of three predictors can be selected for inclusion in the statistical analyses (Field, 2009). Despite its potential importance, gender was not considered as there was a strong imbalance generally, and in Class 1 there was one female and 23 males. As mentioned above, task-related proficiency, and personality have been shown to predict emergent leadership (Forsyth, 2010). English speaking self-efficacy (SE) was hypothesized to predict emergent leadership, as students who are more self-efficacious should be more active in class and

therefore are more likely to be perceived as leaders (Smith & Foti, 1998). Therefore, task-related proficiency (English proficiency), extroversion, and English-speaking self-efficacy were the variables selected.

The ID variables were measured using several questionnaires and tests. Extroversion was measured with the Extrovert/Introvert dimension from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Gow et al., 2005). English proficiency was measured using an in-house dictation test. Dictation has been shown to be an accurate measure of language proficiency (Cai, 2012; Leeming & Wong, 2016; Oller, 1971). The SE variable was measured using items adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), originally developed by Pintrich and de Groot (1990) to measure general academic efficacy. All instruments were translated into Japanese and were piloted with a previous cohort. Dictation, extroversion, and self-efficacy measures were initially analyzed using the Rasch Model. This confirmed the reliability of the measures and converted results to logit scores on a true scale (Bond & Fox, 2007).

The first analysis conducted in HLM is the unconditional model, with GLI scores as the dependent variable, and no predictors in the model. This analysis allows us to determine if there is any variance at the group level. If the model is not significant then there is no difference between groups on the dependent variable (GLI), meaning that group differences are not important, and therefore multiple regression analysis can be used. The HLM analysis showed that group level variance was significant for the GLI1 and GLI2, and therefore HLM was used.

HLM analysis was conducted for the GLI1 and GLI2. In order to account for variation in leadership between individuals, postulated individual predictors of leadership were added to the model at level 1. The variables hypothesized to predict leadership at the individual level were self-efficacy (SEi), task-related proficiency (Prof) represented by the scores on the dictation test, and the extroversion dimension of personality (Ext). The level 2 model has no predictors, in order to isolate variance at the individual level before considering group level constructs.

For the next analyses, a two-level model was run. For the GLI1, the level-1 equation had proficiency and extroversion as the two predictors of leadership, with only proficiency as the individual level predictor for the GLI2. It was hypothesized that the effect of individual proficiency was mediated by the level of English proficiency of the group, and therefore the average

English proficiency of the group was added as a level-2 variable. Likewise, individual extroversion was hypothesized to be mediated by the level of extroversion in the group, and therefore average extroversion was added as a level 2 variable for the GLI1. All of the variables were grand mean-centred. The hypothesis for this model is that in groups where general English proficiency is high, the importance of individual level English proficiency will be reduced, and a negative group effect is predicted. Similarly, for extroversion with the GLI1, a negative group effect is predicted.

Students were observed throughout the study using participant observation (Spradley, 1980), and the researcher (as teacher for all classes) made notes after each class, focusing on leadership within groups. The aim of the observation notes was to help identify the leader and note any incidents where leadership seemed to influence group behavior. Taking notes in this manner reflects the situation of practicing teachers, who must engage with students during lessons, and generally do not have the luxury of passive observation.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a single intact group from each class (three groups in total) at the end of the semester. Groups where clear leaders had been observed by the teacher were selected. Individual interviews were conducted in Japanese, and students were asked to nominate a leader and discuss the role of leaders and the importance of leadership in the language classroom (see Appendix B for interview outline). Interviews were transcribed, and interpretive analysis was adopted for the data (Hatch, 2002). Observation notes were reviewed and compared to the results of the GLI.

Results and Discussion

Teacher Predictions of Leadership

Research Question 1 concerned the ability of the teacher to accurately identify emergent leaders in groups as perceived by students in each group. Weekly observation notes were taken, and at weeks 5 and 10, I noted the student I believed emerged to be the leader for each group. Table 1 shows the results of the GLI representing students' perceptions on the group leader and the teacher selection, with underlined students being those selected by the teacher:

Table 1
General Leadership Impression (GLI) Results

Group	Student No.	GLI1		GLI2	
		Votes	Rating	Votes	Rating
1	8	2	1.16	3	1.55
	9	1	-1.10	1	-0.07
	24		-1.39		-1.34
	3		-2.40		-1.47
2	18	2	2.02	2	2.17
	13	2	1.05	2	1.76
	12		0.48		0.97
	5		-0.29		-0.92
3	20	3	1.43	2	0.95
	22		0.53	2	-0.36
	21		0.42		-0.29
	15	1	-0.38		-0.38
4	1	1	3.49	1	2.16
	16		2.93		3.12
	10		2.36		2.96
	2	3	1.06	3	3.93
5	19	2	1.13	2	0.90
	6	1	0.64	1	0.48
	4		-0.08		0.04
	17		-0.42		-0.49
6	7	3	1.47	4	1.28
	14	1	-0.57		-0.38
	11		-1.37		-0.20
	23		-1.54		-1.69

Group	Student No.	GLI1		GLI2	
		Votes	Rating	Votes	Rating
7	47	2	2.14	1	2.26
	44	1	2.03	2	2.45
	31		1.07		0.40
8	28		0.56	1	0.29
	50		-0.47	1	0.08
	41		-0.79		-2.31
	29		-0.91		-1.03
9	42	4	2.52	3	2.48
	43		0.50		0.34
	38		0.33	1	-0.30
	45		-1.71		-3.14
10	37	3	0.91	1	-0.01
	39		0.80	1	0.24
	46	1	0.07	1	-0.74
	27		-1.40	1	-1.96
11	34	2	1.58	3	-0.76
	33	1	0.44		-0.70
	49	1	0.17	1	-0.29
	51		-1.58		-1.71
12	26	3	0.76	3	0.69
	32		-0.39	1	-0.14
	25		-1.00		-1.53
	35	1	-1.66		-2.91
13	48	3	1.26	2	1.04
	30		-0.17		-0.06
	36	1	-0.69	2	1.47
	40		-1.93		-0.93

Group	Student No.	GLI1		GLI2	
		Votes	Rating	Votes	Rating
14	66	2	1.35	1	0.73
	64	2	0.40	3	1.11
	61		-0.16		-0.20
	71		-1.09		-1.12
15	62	2	0.18	3	1.33
	63		0.16		0.42
	54	1	0.08	1	0.93
	52	1	0.05		0.09
16	72	3	0.81	2	1.23
	60		-0.97		-0.65
	68		-1.06		-1.32
	58	1	-1.20	2	-0.14
17	67	2	0.35	2	1.79
	59	1	0.17	1	0.01
	69		-0.04		-0.27
18	65	3	2.70	3	3.00
	74		0.77		1.46
	75		0.46	1	1.43
	76	1	-0.07		-1.25
19	70	2	1.20	4	0.82
	57	2	-0.03		0.15
	78		-1.56		-1.81
	53		-3.20		-3.02
20	55	1	2.19	1	1.70
	56	2	1.39	1	0.08
	77		0.25	1	0.81
	73	1	-0.67	1	-0.23

Note. Grey indicates highest score for leadership within a group; Underline represents the teacher's choice for group leader.

No underline for a group indicates the teacher could not identify a leader for that group. The grey indicates the student with the highest perceived leadership by group members based on the GLI. The Votes section represents the categorical question asking who the leader was in each group. Students were able to self-select, but close examination of the data showed that students were reluctant to explicitly name themselves as leader. Interviews also showed that students refrained from naming themselves as the leader of the group, and therefore a degree of humility or social obligation might have played a role in the dispersion of categorical votes. A degree of caution should be therefore used when interpreting the results.

In answer to Research Question 1, the results of the GLI show that clear leaders emerged in a majority of the groups. Only one group (Group 8) had all four members select the option of "no leader" for the categorical question. The votes generally supported the results of the GLI. Leadership seemed to be relatively stable over the course of the semester, with 15 of the 20 groups maintaining the same leader over the two administrations of the GLI. These results support Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) and Dörnyei and Murphey (2003), who assert that emergent leaders exist and play an important role in the language classroom.

In terms of accuracy of teacher perceptions, in the fifth week the researcher's perceptions of leader matched with the students in 35% of cases. Five weeks later, in the tenth week, the overlap between student perceptions and teacher perceptions of leadership increased to 65%, suggesting that the ability to identify perceived leaders can increase with an increased familiarity of the students. Overall, my perceptions of leader agreed with the students in exactly 50% of the cases. Group 19 is of particular interest, as my classroom observation notes indicated I was confident that I had identified the leader and maintained this confidence throughout the semester. The GLI and voting shows that I was wrong, and informal discussions with members of this group confirmed the leader as suggested by the GLI. Members stated that he was a quiet leader, who spoke infrequently but made crucial contributions and decisions. I had selected a more outgoing member of the group, who seemed to dominate group interactions. Although beyond the scope of this paper, research in psychology has shown that leaders can vary greatly in their leadership styles (Forsyth, 2010), and the current result suggests active oral engagement may not be an effective way to identify a leader in a group.

As stated previously, much of the literature discussing the appropriate pedagogical approach to group work is founded on the assumption that teachers are able to accurately identify the different emergent roles of students within groups (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; McCafferty et al., 2006; Willis & Willis, 2007) and that teachers therefore can assign students to groups to achieve balance or use emergent leaders to positively influence other students. At the time of the study, I had taught at the university for one year and in Japan for more than 10 years, and was also proficient in the students' first language. Despite my experience, and extensive reading of leadership research in general psychology, I was only able to achieve 50% success in identifying leaders. Throughout the course I was looking for signs of leadership based on teaching experience and research conducted in general psychology (Lord et al., 1984) and made notes after each class. When considering the average teacher with less grounding in leadership research and using intuition to identify the leaders in a classroom, the results of this study suggest that researchers may be overconfident in their assumption that emergent leadership is easily recognizable to teachers. Strong leaders were generally readily identified, but more subtle displays of leadership were difficult for the teacher to notice.

Overall, with regards to Research Question 1, it becomes clear that leaders emerge in most groups in a TBLT language classroom and that teachers have moderate success identifying students perceived as leaders by their group members. This ability to identify leaders seems to increase with familiarity with students. However, the teacher's judgement of leader may well differ from that of the group, and therefore caution is advised for teachers when constructing groups or assigning roles based on their own perceptions of students.

Predicting Leadership in Groups

Research Question 2 was interested in IDs that may predict emergent leadership. The descriptive statistics for the variables are shown in Appendix C. The results of the HLM analysis for GLI1 and GLI2 are shown in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. The results from Table 2 show that both proficiency and extroversion had a significant effect on the outcome of leadership as represented by GLI1. Table 3 shows that for the GLI2 (week 10) English proficiency was the only significant individual level predictor of leadership.

Table 2
Estimation of Significant Effects of Individual Differences on GLI1

Fixed effect	Coefficient	*SE*	*t*-ratio	*df*	*p*
SEi on GLI1, γ_{10}	.06	.06	1.11	55	.27
Prof on GLI1, γ_{20}	.25	.10	2.46	55	.02
Ext on GLI1, γ_{30}	.18	.07	2.56	55	.01

Note. SEi = Self-efficacy; Prof = Proficiency measured by dictation; EXT = Extroversion; GLI = General Leadership Impression. χ 2 for the model was 70.80 ($p < .01$)

Table 3
Estimation of Significant Effects of Individual Differences on the GLI2

Fixed effect	Coefficient	*SE*	*t*-ratio	*df*	*p*
SEi on GLI2, γ_{10}	.09	.06	1.41	55	.15
Prof on GLI2, γ_{20}	.25	.11	2.26	55	.03
Ext on GLI2, γ_{30}	.11	.11	1.00	55	.35

Note. SEi = Self-efficacy; Prof = Proficiency as measured by dictation; EXT = Extroversion; GLI = General Leadership Impression. χ 2 for the model was 60.82 ($p < .01$)

Overall χ2 for the model for GLI1 was 60.32 ($p < .01$). Overall χ2 for the model for GLI2 was 60.82 ($p < .01$). Although a significant group level variance was found, the analyses showed that group-level predictors were not significant and had no interaction with level-1 variables. This means the group-level factors influencing who becomes leader were present in the data, but the variance in the data was not explained by this model.

In answer to Research Question 2, English Proficiency was the only consistent predictor of perceived leadership and only accounted for a small amount of the variance. The findings for the second research question may surprise some teachers, who assume that proficient, confident, and outgoing students will take on the leadership role in a group. The results suggest that although language proficiency has some predictive power, it is limited and that the complex interactions of IDs and group context may affect its predictive power. The implication for teachers is that proficiency has a limited capacity, as measured by an established test or a dictation administered in class, to predict who will be the leader in a given group.

Student Views on Emergent Leadership

Research Question 3 aimed to determine the views of students regarding emergent leadership in small groups in the language classroom. One group of students from each class was selected and interviewed (Groups 4, 9, 16). Students corroborated the results of the GLI regarding who had been the leader in each group. They believed that leadership was important to the success of a group, that they had been influenced by the leader in their group, and that both personality and English proficiency were important in determining who would be the leader. Each of these points will be discussed.

Students generally considered leadership to be important to the eventual success of a group and for language learning. Yuma from Group 4 explained that "The leader basically brings all of the members together and unites everyone." The phrase in Japanese used by several students was "*matomeru*" which can be translated as coordinate or bring something to a successful conclusion. Groups felt that without a leader this became far more difficult. As mentioned previously, only one group claimed to have no leader (Group 8). They were observed struggling to maintain conversations and tended to have long silences when interacting with one another. Group 8 had no leader to bring the students together or to demonstrate the kind of behaviors that would result in successful interaction in English. Students were united in feeling that a strong leader helped the group, again supporting the claims of Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) and Dörnyei and Murphey (2003).

Students also believed that the leaders in the group had influenced their behavior. Often this was from modeling the desired behaviour. Leaders had initiated conversation, controlled the interactions, and been responsible for the level of conversation that the group was able to achieve. Yukiko (Group 9) claimed that Shuya was a very strong leader in her group. According to her, "Shuya became the central figure and led us. All we had to do was follow, and everything went well. He was a huge influence." Shuya had been readily identified as leader in my observation notes, described as the strongest leader in the class, and he was dominant in most interactions in the group. Yukiko felt that this was a very positive thing that had led to the success of the group. Students in Group 16 referred to Shohei as the leader, but in far weaker terms, and claimed that he had initiated and tried to maintain conversation but that his relatively low English speaking proficiency held him back in his role. The two female members of the group referred to him as being "like" a leader or "the most like a leader" in his behaviour. They claimed that he had influenced them and that they had tried to imitate his behaviour, by actively asking questions and being involved in conversation.

Generally, students believed that the leader of the group had a direct impact on their own behavior in the classroom.

In terms of factors that predict who the leader will be in a given group, students felt that personality and English proficiency were important. Risa in Group 16 stated that because she could not speak English, she could not be the leader. Taka from Group 9 felt that it was a combination of personality and proficiency, saying that "It is not just about English proficiency. It is also about personality. Personality is actually the most important thing." Students generally seemed to express the idea that being a leader involved a combination of personality and proficiency and that being proficient in English or being very extroverted alone would not lead to a leadership role.

In summary, the results for Research Question 3 suggest that students consider leadership within small groups to be of importance within the language classroom. Leaders bring the group together and influence other members by modeling behavior. Contrary to the findings of the second research question, students believed that personality was the overriding factor in determining who would become the leader in a given group.

Conclusion

Despite teacher educators strongly advocating group work (Brown & Lee, 2015; Harmer, 2010) and a general acceptance of the importance of student leadership in groups (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003), this study is the first in the field of SLA to focus on teachers' ability to identify students perceived as emergent leaders in their own classroom. The results show that generally leaders emerge in small groups in the language classroom, and therefore group leadership must be considered by both teachers and researchers. Much of the pedagogic advice for teachers regarding how to deal with emergent leadership is founded on their ability to identify students who adopt this role, and yet results also highlight the lack of precision in identifying leaders by the teacher, with only limited success in identifying emergent leaders within small groups. This means teachers need to be cautious when using intuition to identify different student roles in the classroom. Teacher educators should reconsider their advice to teachers, as much of it is founded on the assumption that teachers can identify the leader of a group (Brown & Lee, 2015; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; McCafferty et al., 2006; Willis & Willis, 2007).

The pedagogical implications of this research are far reaching. Many researchers recommend the deliberate construction of groups, and teachers may construct groups to achieve a balance, assigning students they perceive

to be leaders to different groups or attempting to create groups balanced in leadership. Project-based learning is increasingly popular in language learning (see Mills, 2009), requiring students to work in the same group for sustained periods, and if teachers construct groups based on their understanding of who the leaders are in the class, this approach may have limitations. If teachers are unable to accurately identify the leaders in groups, then the most effective approach is to change groups on a regular basis in order to allow the students different learning experiences and to minimize the differential impact of leadership within groups.

If teachers have a limited ability to accurately identify emergent leaders as perceived by students, then it becomes of increasing importance to establish ID variables which can be used to predict leadership. Teachers may assume that students who are more proficient or more extroverted will assume the role of leader, but in the current study ID variables were of limited use in predicting who would emerge as leader within a particular group. Task-related ability, which in this case was English proficiency, was consistently significant but only accounted for a small amount of variance in the model. Extroversion, although initially significant, lost influence over time, and self-efficacy was found to be unrelated to leadership in this context. Most practicing teachers assume that students who are confident and proficient in English will become leaders in the group, but the results suggest that emergent leadership is a far more complex variable. Teachers can use proficiency to aid in identifying potential leaders but be aware of the limitations of this approach.

Interviews with students revealed that they consider leaders to be integral to the success of the group. Many students admitted to being influenced by the leader and attempting to copy the behavior of the leader. This supports the claims by Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) that leaders are central to the success of a group and again suggests that rotating group membership is the fairest approach. Students felt that both personality and English proficiency interacted in determining who became the leader in each group.

Perhaps the most important limitation in the current study was the dual roles of researcher and teacher adopted by the author. Although this provided access to the students and allowed participatory observation, it may have influenced students' behavior and their responses for interviews and questionnaires. Administration of various questionnaires, including measures of personality and the GLI, may also have impacted on students' views regarding leadership, influencing the outcome. In particular, the GLI may have heightened student awareness of leadership. Due to the explora-

tory nature of this research, the data focused on only one teacher's ability to identify emergent leaders as perceived by the students within each group, and was therefore limited in scope, and dependent on the criteria used to identify leaders within groups. Future studies should use a larger number of teachers to add weight to the findings. Furthermore, different styles and kinds of leadership (Forsyth, 2010) were not considered, and future research should investigate the impact of different leadership approaches and styles on language learning. Research also needs to clearly show how leadership impacts student task engagement and language learning. Finally, due to the exploratory nature of the current study, the relatively small number of participants for the statistical analyses employed means that quantitative data should be interpreted with caution.

Emergent leadership has the potential to influence the ways that students interact in groups and holds sway over the effectiveness of group work and project work in the language classroom. As one of the central themes in group dynamics research in psychology, it is time that researchers and teachers in the language classroom began to consider leadership and its potential impact on language learning in groups. Future studies should seek to determine the impact that emergent leadership may have on the interaction and overall performance of groups.

Paul Leeming has taught in Japan for more than twenty years. He has published widely in a number of international journals.

References

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control.* W.H. Freeman.

Bond, T. G., & Fox, C. M. (2007). *Applying the Rasch model: Fundamental measurement in the human sciences* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Brown, H. D., & Lee, H. (2015). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (4th ed.). Pearson.

Cai, H. (2012). Partial dictation as a measure of EFL listening proficiency: Evidence from confirmatory factor analysis. *Language Testing 30*(2), 177–199. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532212456833

Chemers, M. M. (2001). Leadership effectiveness: An integrative review. In M. Hogg & R. S. Tindale (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Group processes* (pp. 376–399). Blackwell.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.

Cronshaw, S. F., & Lord, R. G. (1987). Effects of categorization, attribution, and encoding processes on leadership perceptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 72*(1), 97–106. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.72.1.97

Dörnyei, Z., & Murphey, T. (2003). *Group dynamics in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.

Ehrman, M. E., & Dörnyei, Z. (1998). *Interpersonal dynamics in second language education: the visible and invisible classroom.* Sage Publications.

Field, A. P. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS.* Sage Publications.

Forsyth, D. R. (2010). *Group dynamics*. Cengage Learning.

Gow, A., Whiteman, M., Pattie, A., & Deary, I. (2005). Goldberg's 'IPIP' big-five factor markers: Internal consistency and concurrent validation in Scotland. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *39*(2), 317–329. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2005.01.011

Harmer, J. (2010). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th ed.). Longman.

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. SUNY Press.

Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., Ilies, R., & Gerhardt, M. W. (2002). Personality and leadership: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(4), 765–779. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.4.765.

Judge, T. A., Piccolo, R. F., & Kosalka, T. (2009). The bright and dark sides of leader traits: A review and theoretical extension of the leader trait paradigm. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *20*(6), 855–875. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2009.09.004

Lantolf, J. P. (2006). Sociocultural theory and L2: State of the art. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *28*(01), 67–109. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263106060037

Leeming, P. (2011). Japanese high school students' use of the L1 during pair-work. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 21*(3), 360–382. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2011.00284.x

Leeming, P. (2014). Group formation and longevity in the foreign language classroom: students' views. *The Journal of Asia TEFL, 11*(3), 105–132

Leeming, P. (2019). Emergent leadership and group interaction in the task-based language classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 53*(3), 768–793. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.506

Leeming P., & Wong, A. (2016). Using dictation to measure language proficiency: A Rasch analysis. *Papers in Language Testing and Assessment, 5*(2), 1–25. http://dx.doi.org/10.5746/LEiA/14/V5/I1/A13/Wong_Leeming

Linacre, J. M. (2011). *A user's guide to FACETS: Rasch-model computer program.* MESA Press.

Lord, R., Foti, R. J., & De Vader, C. L. (1984). A test of leadership categorization theory: Internal structure, information processing, and leadership perceptions. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, *34*(3), 343–378. https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(84)90043-6

McCafferty, S. G., Jacobs, G. M., & DaSilva Iddings, A. C. (2006). *Cooperative learning and second language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Mills, N. (2009). A Guide du Routard simulation: Increasing self-efficacy in the standards through project-based learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, *42*(4), 607–639. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2009.01046.x

Mills, N. (2014). Self-efficacy in second language acquisition. In S. Mercer & M. Williams (Eds.), *Multiple perspectives on the self in SLA* (pp. 6–19). Multilingual Matters.

Northouse, P. G. (2009). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Sage Publications.

Oller, J. (1971). Dictation as a device for testing foreign-language proficiency. *ELT Journal, 25*(3)*,* 254–259. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/XXV.3.254

Pintrich, P. R., & de Groot, E. V. (1990). Motivational and self-regulated learning components of classroom academic performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *82*(1), 33–40. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.82.1.33

Philp, J., Adams, R., & Iwashita, N. (2013). *Peer interaction and second language learning.* Routledge.

Raudenbush, S. W., & Bryk, A. S. (2002). *Hierarchical linear models: Applications and data analysis methods*. Sage Publications.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Smith, J. & Foti, R. (1998). A pattern approach to the study of leader emergence. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *9*(2), 147–160. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(98)90002-9

Storch, N. (2002). Patterns of interaction in ESL pair work. *Language Learning*, *52*(1), 119–158. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9922.00179

Swain, M. (2005). The output hypothesis: theory and research. In E. Hinkel (Ed.) *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 471–483). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Taggar, S., Hackew, R., & Saha, S. (1999). Leadership emergence in autonomous work teams: Antecedents and outcomes. *Personnel Psychology*, *52*(4), 899–926. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1999.tb00184.x

Tuan, T. A., & Storch, N. (2007). Investigating group planning in preparation for oral presentations in an EFL class in Vietnam. *RELC Journal, 38*(1), 104–124. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688206076162

Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. Longman.

Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Yashima, T., Ikeda, M., & Nakahira, S., (2016). Talk and silence in an EFL classroom: Interplay of learners and context. In J. King, (Ed.) *The dynamic interplay between context and the learner* (pp. 104–126). Palgrave Macmillan.

Zaccaro, S. J., Foti, R. J., & Kenny, D. A. (1991). Self-monitoring and trait-based variance in leadership: An investigation of leader flexibility across multiple group situations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *76*(2), 308–315. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.76.2.308

Appendix A

General Leadership Impression (GLI)

Consider each member of your group individually. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Rate from 1 (completely disagree) to 4 (completely agree).

1. This person exhibited leadership.
2. I would choose this person as a formal leader.
3. This person was a typical leader.
4. This person engaged in leadership behavior.
5. This person fits my image of a leader.
6. This person coordinated group behavior.
7. This person assigned tasks to members.
8. This person made sure that the group was working effectively.
9. This person created a positive working atmosphere.
10. This person listened to all members of the group.

Categorical question:

If you were to choose a leader of your group, who would you select?

Student A/B/C Myself No leader

Appendix B

Interview outline

1. Background information. English study to date. Group work to date. Positive/negative experiences. Typical leader.
2. Describe the other members of group. Relationship outside of class/ prior relationship.
3. Results of GLI-Check and talk about each group member.
4. Why did you choose X as leader? How did they become leader? Were they a good/bad leader? Did they influence you? How?

Appendix C

Descriptive Statistics for Variables

	GLI 1	GLI 2	Extro-version	Proficiency	Self-efficacy
M	.29	.27	-.40	1.55	-2.75
SE	.14	.15	.15	.13	.30
95% CI	[.02, .56]	[-.02, .56]	[-.69, -.11]	[1.30, 1.80]	[-3.35, -2.16]
SD	1.22	1.28	1.28	1.13	2.64
Skewness	.12	-.01	.32	1.12	.05
SES	.27	.27	.27	.27	.27
Kurtosis	.08	.13	-.41	5.20	.32
SEK	.54	.54	.54	.53	.54

Note. GLI 1 = General Leadership Impression 1; GLI 2 = General Leadership Impression 2