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In this month's issue . . .

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the May/June issue of *The Language Teacher*! As always, this issue brings together a diverse collection of research and insights that reflect the dedication and innovation of educators and researchers in the field of language teaching in Japan.

This issue features two compelling Feature Articles that offer fresh perspectives on language learning and instruction. The first article, by **Olga Li**, presents a corpus-based analysis of textbook data and highlights discrepancies in usage that have important implications for classroom instruction and materials development. The study underscores the role of corpora in enhancing the authenticity of language learning resources.

The second article, by **Robert Long**, shares findings from a year-long study of Japanese learners' academic writing development. The study examines how increased writing practice and the use of online grammar checkers influence syntactic complexity, fluency, and grammatical accuracy and offers valuable insights for educators seeking to optimize writing instruction in EFL settings.

We also want to take this opportunity to honor Robert Long, a former *TLT* editor, who is retiring from his current role as a reviewer. His insightful contributions have profoundly shaped our journal and enriched our community, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude for his dedicated service and wish him every success in his other endeavors.

In our Readers' Forum, **Mark Goodhew** explores an often-overlooked topic in Japanese higher education: the role of dispatch language companies at Japanese universities. This analysis provides an in-depth look at how these companies operate within the university system, how they affect employment practices, and how they influence English language education in Japan. The discussion prompts us to reflect on the evolving role of language instruction in academia.

Beyond these feature articles, this issue includes insightful contributions from our JALT Praxis columns, which continue to offer practical teaching ideas, professional development resources, and community updates. Additionally, our My Share

Continued over



TLT Editors: Brian Strong & Greg Dalziel
TLT Japanese Language Editor: Mami Ueda

column presents a selection of classroom-tested activities designed to engage learners and enhance language acquisition.

A publication like *The Language Teacher* would not be possible without the dedication and hard work of numerous volunteers. I would like to express my gratitude to the authors, reviewers, copyeditors, proofreaders, and translators who contribute their time and expertise to making each issue a valuable resource for our community.

Erratum:

In the first Feature Article of issue 49.2, A Critical Examination of Lists of Formulaic Items, the photos of co-authors Dale Brown and Lewis Murray were inadvertently reversed. We apologize for this oversight, which has now been corrected in the online version.

We hope you enjoy the issue, and we appreciate your readership.

— Brian Strong, TLT *Co-editor*

The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)

A Nonprofit Organization

The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) is a nonprofit professional organization dedicated to the improvement of language teaching and learning in Japan. It provides a forum for the exchange of new ideas and techniques and a means of keeping informed about developments in the rapidly changing field of second and foreign language education.

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皆さん、こんにちは。*The Language Teacher* 5/6 月号へようこそ！いつものように日本の言語教育分野の教育者と研究者らによる献身的な努力と革新的な考えに基づき、見識豊かな研究を多数取り揃えて掲載しています。

本号には、言語学習及び言語指導に関して新鮮な視点を提供する魅力的なFeature Articleが2編掲載されています。最初の記事はOlga Li によるもので、教科書データのコーパス分析を提示し、授業指導や教材開発にとって重要な意味合いを持つ、語用法における乖離を取り上げています。この研究は言語学習リソースの真正性を高める際にコーパスが果たす役割について強調しています。

二つ目の記事はRobert Long によるもので、日本人学習者によるアカデミック・ライティング力の向上に関する 1 年間の研究結果を紹介しています。この研究では、ライティング練習の回数を増やすこととオンラインの文法チェッカーを使用することが、構文の複雑さ、流暢さ、文法上の正確さにどのように影響するかを調べ、EFL 環境下におけるライティング指導の最適化を試みる教育者に貴重な考えを提供します。

また、元*TLT* 編集者で現在は校閲を行っているRobert Longは、この業務から退くことになったので、この場をお借りして彼に敬意を表したいと思います。洞察力に満ち溢れた彼の貢献により本誌は大きく成長し、私たちのコミュニティは豊かになりました。私たちは彼の献身的な働きに心から感謝し、今後の彼の取り組みがあらゆる面で成功することを祈っております。

Readers’ Forumでは、Mark Goodhewが日本の大学における語学講師派遣会社の役割について考察しています。この点は日本の高等教育で見落とされがちです。この分析では、これらの会社が大学システム内でどのように機能し、雇用慣行にどのように影響し、さらには日本の英語教育にどのように影響を与えているのかを詳細に検討しています。この議論は、学術界において常に変化している語学教育の役割について考えるきっかけとなります。

これらの特集記事以外に、洞察力に富んだJALT Praxisからの原稿も含まれており、実践的な指導のアイデア、専門的な開発に活用可能な情報、コミュニティの最新情報を提供し続けています。My Share では学習者の関心を引き、言語習得を活発化させるように作られた教室活動実践事例集をお届けいたします。

*The Language Teacher*のような出版物は、多数のボランティアによる献身や努力なくして出版することはできません。各号をコミュニティにとっての有益な情報源とするために時間と専門知識を提供してくれた執筆者、校閲者、編集者、校正者、翻訳者の皆様に心から感謝いたします。

訂正: 第 49.2 号の最初のFeature Articleである A *Critical Examination of Lists of Formulaic Items*で、共著者の Dale Brown と Lewis Murray の写真が誤って逆になっていました。この見落としについてお詫びいたします。オンライン版ではすでに修正されています。

本号をお楽しみください。いつもご愛読いただき、ありがとうございます。

— Brian Strong, *TLT* 共同編集者

Comparative Corpus-Based Analysis of "Hard" and "Difficult" and Comparison With Junior High School English Course Books

Olga Li
Toyama Prefectural University

This study compares the usage of "hard" and "difficult" in Japanese junior high school English textbooks with corpus data, highlighting frequency and usage differences. English education in Japan is increasingly emphasizing communicative competence. Incorporating authentic language data into teaching is crucial, especially for Japanese teachers, as they might seek references and authentic materials for teaching English as an International Language. However, exclusive reliance on authentic English may not always be optimal due to pedagogical and cultural considerations.

本研究では、日本の中学校英語教科書における「hard」と「difficult」の用法をコーパスデータと比較し、頻度と用法の違いに注目した。日本の英語教育は、コミュニケーション能力を重視する傾向にある。国際言語としての英語を指導する際に、生きた英語を参考資料や教材として求める可能性があるため、特に日本人教師にとって、実際に使用されている言葉のコーパスデータを教育に取り入れることは重要である。しかし、教育上および文化的な配慮から、単に本物の英語のみに頼ることが必ずしも最良の方法とは限らない。

Keywords: Corpus-based research, junior high school, English course books, frequency, synonyms

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English today is often referred to as English as an International Language when its users are focused on communicative efficiency rather than grammatical accuracy. This trend can also be seen in Japan, where the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology emphasizes the need to acquire English as a tool for international communication. With the development of the Internet and information technologies, teachers now have extensive access to authentic language data and a wide range of teaching materials and tools. Given that most English teachers in Japanese junior high schools are non-native speakers of English, corpora can serve as valuable references for teachers' explanations and the creation of learning materials (Flowerdew, 2012), as corpora provide a reliable source of authentic English. However, this authentic English data does not always align with the language represented in designated English course textbooks in Japan.

The corpus-based approach is linked to the lexical approach, which is based on the idea that words are not used separately in language (Harmer, 2015). The lexical approach focuses on teaching lexis in collocations and chunks, which can help learners acquire real English instead of the artificial English presented in course books. This study uses corpus data to compare the way the adjectives "hard" and "difficult" and the adverb "hard" are presented in the junior high school English textbook series Sunshine English Course (Kairyudo, 2021) and New Horizon English Course (Tokyo Shoseki, 2021). This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the usage frequency of these two words across various genres?
2. What "hard + noun" and "difficult + noun" collocations are more frequent and does this data match the presentations of collocations in English course books?
3. What "verb + hard" collocations are more frequent and does this data match the presentations of collocations in English course books?

This paper first describes previous corpus-based research of synonyms and analyzes the ways "difficult" and "hard" are presented in major British and American dictionaries as well as in two junior high school English textbook series. Data extracted from corpora are then presented, followed by answers to the research questions and discussion of the findings and further research questions.

Previous Corpus-based Studies on Synonyms

Nowadays, many researchers and teachers consider corpus data to be a reliable source of authentic English and apply this data to their teaching practices. Shahzadi et al. (2019) compared "reach" and "arrive" synonym pairs using the British National Corpus (e.g., https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc) and the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (https://www.ldoceonline.com). They found that "reach" is used more frequently than "arrive," but the two verbs share many similar grammatical patterns. Their findings suggest that these patterns

can help teachers explain the differences in usage of these two verbs, providing an "effective strategy to distinguish and teach synonyms . . . in ESL classroom[s]" (Shahzadi et al., 2019, p. 51).

Petcharat and Phoocharoensil (2017) investigated three English synonyms—"appropriate," "proper," and "suitable"—in terms of meaning, genre, collocations, and grammatical features. The researchers used data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA; https://www.english-corpora.org/coca) and three dictionaries: *Longman Advanced American Dictionary* (2013), *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary* (Rundell, 2010), and Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (https://www.ldoceonline.com). They determined that these three synonyms share the same core meaning but differ in "detailed meanings, degrees of formality, collocations, and grammatical patterns" (Petcharat & Phoocharoensil, 2017, p. 10). They also discovered that corpora could provide additional information not available in dictionaries and therefore suggested that corpora can be powerful learning tools to help students differentiate similar words.

Mikajiri (2023) adopted a different approach by comparing target-like lexical bundles used in Japanese elementary and junior high school English textbooks with a spoken English corpus, SubtlexUS (http://www.lexique.org/?page_id=241). He discovered that the number and variety of lexical bundles used in textbooks exceeded those used in spoken English. Mikajiri (2023) suggested revising textbooks based on the real use of spoken English.

While the above-mentioned studies do not focus on the words "hard" and "difficult," they illustrate the potential for teachers to use corpora as sources of additional information that cannot be found in dictionaries. These studies also highlight the possibility of discrepancies between the language presented in textbooks and the data from corpora.

"Hard" and "Difficult" in Dictionaries

Dictionaries provide learners and teachers with reliable information about meanings, collocations, and examples of target language use. This study compares data obtained from four major dictionaries of both American English (AmE) and British English (BrE): The Merriam-Webster Thesaurus (AmE) (https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus), hereinafter Merriam-Webster; Oxford Learner's Dictionary (BrE) (https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries/com/definition/engish), hereinafter Oxford; Collins English Thesaurus (BrE) (https://collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-thesaurus), hereinafter Collins; and Cambridge Dictionary (BrE) (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary), hereinafter Cambridge.

Collins and Cambridge list solid or tough (e.g., hard floor, hard surface) as the first meaning for the adjective "hard," aligning with Lindquist and Levin's (2018) observation that dictionaries tend to prioritize physical explanations. However, Merriam-Webster lists ruthless (e.g., hard man) and Oxford lists difficult (e.g., hard choice) as the first meaning. Both of these are metaphorical, contrasting with the primarily physical meanings in Collins and Cambridge. Oxford ranks physical meaning sixth, and Merriam-Webster eighth (see Appendix A). Interestingly, however, the meaning of "hard" as difficult to do, using effort, or exhausting (e.g., hard work) occupies high positions in all four dictionaries: second in Merriam-Webster and third in Collins, Cambridge, and Oxford. This indicates a consensus between AmE and BrE on the high frequency of this meaning.

There is also agreement on the first meaning of the adverb "hard" in all four dictionaries: intensively (e.g., work hard). Other high-ranking meanings (see Appendix A) include with great force (e.g., don't hit so hard, kicked the bin very hard) and strongly (e.g., rain hard).

All four dictionaries list challenging or not easy to do as the first meaning for "difficult" (e.g., difficult question, difficult problem), and all but Cambridge list problematical as the second meaning (e.g., difficult situation, difficult decision) (see Appendix B).

"Hard" and "Difficult" in English Course Books

This study examines two English textbook series used in Japanese junior high schools: Sunshine English Course (Kairyudo, 2021) and New Horizon English Course (Tokyo Shoseki, 2021). All sentences containing the words "hard" and "difficult" (see Appendices C and D) were analyzed (see Table 1).

Further analysis revealed that the adjective "hard" in its physical meaning occurs only twice across both series and the abstract meaning is primarily used in the phrase "hard work". There are no examples of other common uses such as hard choices and hard questions. Similarly, "hard" as an adverb is used two out of three times in both series in the phrase "practice hard."

On the other hand, "difficult" often appears in the more complex structure "it + be + difficult + for + me/us/them + to + verb" (i.e., three of six times in *Sunshine* and five of 12 in *New Horizon*). In contrast, there is only one instance, in *New Horizon 3*, of "hard" used in the same manner: "It's hard for me to

get up early" (Tokyo Shoseki, 2021, p. 39).

Interestingly, the Sunshine English Course includes 12 sentences using "difficult," whereas the Sunshine English Course includes includes only six. Both frequently introduce the phrase "practice hard," however, perhaps suggesting that students are likely to use this collocation more easily than others, or that this is the most common collocation with "hard."

Table 1

Occurrences of "Hard" and "Difficult" in English Textbooks

Term: Definition	English textbook	
	Sunshine	Horizon
Hard (adjective): Physical meaning (solid or tough)	2	0
Hard (adjective): Abstract meaning (ruthless)	3	3
Hard (adverb): Using effort	6	9
Difficult (adjective): Challenging, full of problems	6	12

Corpus Data

For this research, COCA (https://www.english-corpora.org/coca) was used to find frequency data for the terms and collocations. COCA contains more than one billion words across eight different genres: spoken language, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic texts, television, movies, blogs, and webpages. It is one of the largest freely available, well-balanced, and widely used corpora of American English.

Frequency of Term Usage by Genre

As predicted, the highest frequency of the adjective "hard," at 247.52 occurrences per million words, was found in blogs, while the lowest frequency, at 76.84, was found in academic English (see Table 2). Notably, usage in the spoken English genre ranked second.

The highest frequency of "hard" as an adverb (see Table 3), at 196.48, was found in the fiction genre, which was somewhat unexpected when compared to use of the adjective. The lowest frequency was again found in academic English. However, corpus and textbook data present different patterns. While "hard" is more frequently used as an adjective in the corpus, textbooks use it more as an adverb. In the *Sunshine* series, "hard" appears as an adjective five times and as an adverb six times, and in the *New Horizon* series, three and nine times, respectively (see Table 1).

Table 2

Frequency of "Hard" (adjective) by Genre in COCA

Genre	Frequency	Per million
All	198,246	199.64
Blog	31,834	247.52
Web	27,184	218.78
TV/movies	25,550	199.49
Spoken	29,970	237.60
Fiction	24,380	206.05
Magazine	27,522	218.27
Newspaper	22,601	185.65
Academic	9,205	76.84

Table 3

Frequency of "Hard" (adverb) by Genre in COCA

Genre	Frequency	Per million
All	109,755	110.53
Blog	15,565	121.02
Web	13,331	107.29
TV/movies	16,821	131.34
Spoken	13,196	104.62
Fiction	23,248	196.48
Magazine	12,269	97.30
Newspaper	11,801	96.93
Academic	3,524	29.42

The highest frequency of "difficult" was found in academic English (see Table 4), indicating a clear preference for "difficult" over "hard" in this context. Also, while there is not much difference in the frequency of "difficult" between academic and spoken English, "hard" is used as an adjective much more frequently in spoken English than in academic contexts.

This raises a question regarding the adjective "difficult," which is often used in academic English and is also emphasized in English textbooks, particularly *New Horizon* (see Table 1). At the same time, there is a notable difference between the frequency data for "hard" and "difficult" compared to their usage in textbooks. For example, *New Horizon* contains 12 occurrences of "difficult" but only three of "hard."

Table 4

Frequency of "Difficult" by Genre in COCA

Genre	Frequency	Per million
All	136,562	137.52
Blog	18,235	141.78
Web	18,252	146.89
TV/movies	7,714	60.23
Spoken	23,128	183.36
Fiction	8,338	70.47
Magazine	18,313	145.24
Newspaper	17,545	144.12
Academic	25,037	209.01

Frequency of Collocations

There are other interesting aspects of COCA frequency data. For instance, the frequency data of "hard + noun" collocations (see Table 5) is partially reflected in the two textbooks examined: several occurrences of "hard work," ranked second, are found in both textbooks.

Table 5

"Hard" + Noun Collocation Frequency in COCA

Rank	Collocate	Frequency
1	time	10,822
2	work	10,584
3	drive	3,673
4	times	2,899
5	way	2,610

Similarly, the top three most frequent verbs used in the "verb + hard" collocation (see Table 6) are all forms of the verb work. However, as mentioned earlier, the adverb "hard" was used most often in the textbooks with the verb practice, but the collocation "practice hard" was notably absent from the top 100 "verb + hard" collocations in COCA. This discrepancy suggests that the language in textbooks might not fully align with authentic usage. The emphasis on "practice hard" in Japanese textbooks may be influenced by cultural values that prioritize diligence and pedagogical reasons that stress repetitive practice as a learning strategy.

Table 6

Verb + "Hard" Collocation Frequency in COCA

Rank	Collocate	Frequency
1	work	5,939
2	worked	4,445
3	working	3,873
4	hit	1,195
5	trying	1,082

COCA data shows that "time" is the word most frequently used in the "difficult + noun" collocation (see Table 7) and both textbooks contain examples of the collocation "difficult time/times." However, other collocations like "difficult problems" or "difficult challenge," which appear in *Sunshine* and *New Horizon*, are not found among the top 10 collocations. This discrepancy again highlights the gap between textbook language and authentic usage.

Table 7

"Difficult" + Noun Collocation Frequency in COCA

Rank	Collocate	Frequency
1	time	3,190
2	task	1,082
3	situation	1,037
4	thing	1,015
5	times	1,007

Conclusion

This study compared the use of "hard" and "difficult" in two Japanese junior high school English textbook series with data from dictionaries and the COCA corpus. It found that although "hard" is more frequent than "difficult" in most genres except academic English, the textbooks contained more examples of "difficult," despite the otherwise predominant use in these textbooks of language from the spoken and fiction genres.

Some collocations such as "hard + noun" and "difficult + noun" align with COCA data, but others like "practice hard" appear frequently in textbooks yet are not prevalent in COCA. This suggests that textbooks only partially reflect authentic usage of English.

Teachers can leverage these findings for pedagogical purposes. For example, although "work hard" is

the most frequent "verb + hard" collocation, this does not appear in the two textbooks analyzed. Teachers, however, can introduce it as additional useful material. Further research on other synonyms as well could provide even more examples of authentic language that is helpful for learners of English.

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Olga Li has lived in Japan for over 20 years. She has been involved in English education in a wide range of roles: teaching at private conversation schools, teaching at cram schools, tutoring, managing an English preschool, and serving as a JET in public elementary schools. Currently, she is a lecturer at Toyama Prefectural University. She holds a master's degree in linguistics, has a CELTA certificate, and is currently involved in a DipTESOL course. Her research interests include teaching English as a lingua franca, particularly pronunciation instruction, using generative AI and machine translation in language learning, and enhancing learner motivation and engagement.

Appendix A

Meanings of "Hard" (Adjective and Adverb) From Four Major Dictionaries

Order	Dictionary							
	Merriam-Webster (adj)	Merriam-Webster (adv)	Oxford (adj)	Oxford (adv)	Collins (adj)	Collins (adv)	Cambridge (adj)	Cambridge (adv)
1	ruthless (a hard man)	intensively (working hard)	difficult (hard choice)	with effort (work hard)	tough (hard floor)	strenuously (work hard)	solid (hard surface)	using effort (work hard)
2	difficult (hard work)	bitterly (took the news of their pet's death hard)	Tough (hard life)	with great force (don't hit so hard!)	difficult (hard question)	intently (listen hard to hear him)	difficult (hard questions)	weather (it rains hard)
3	sturdy	strongly (the wind blew hard all day)	using effort (hard work)	carefully (think hard)	exhausting (hard work)	forcefully (kicked the bin very hard)	using effort (hard work)	
4	reasonable (hard evidence)	close (the groom stood hard by)	putting a lot of effort into an activity (he's hard at work)	a lot (rain hard)	Forceful (hard push)	with difficulty (the hard won right)	severe (hard time)	

Order	Dictionary							
	Merri-am-Webster (adj)	Merri-am-Webster (adv)	Oxford (adj)	Oxford (adv)	Collins (adj)	Collins (adv)	Cambridge (adj)	Cambridge (adv)
5	tough (hard life)	harshly (treat hard)	done with a lot of force (hard kick)	sharp angle (turn hard right)	harsh (hard man)		harsh (be hard on someone)	
6	intense (years of hard wear)		solid/stiff (a hard mattress)		grim (hard times)		alcohol (a hard drink)	
7	strict (a hard disciplinarian)		without sympathy (hard stare)		definite (hard evidence)		water (hard water)	
8	solid (hard candies)		not afraid (you're really hard)		bitter (hard words)		clear (hard facts)	
9	stable (hard line between right and wrong)		definitely true (hard evidence)				weather (hard winter)	
10	sore (hard feelings)		weather (hard winter)					
11	stubborn		drink (hard liquor)					
12	historical (hard news)		water (a hard water area)					

Note. The order and examples extracted by the author are from Merriam-Webster Thesaurus, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Collins English Thesaurus, and Cambridge Dictionary.

Appendix B

Meanings of "Difficult" From Four Major Dictionaries

Order	Dictionary			
	Merriam-Webster	Oxford	Collins	Cambridge
1	challenging (difficult questions)	Not easy, needing effort or skill (a difficult decision, question)	hard/ not easy to do (it is difficult to read the sign)	Needing skill or effort (a difficult problem, choice)
2	tough (difficult situation)	full of problems (a difficult situation)	problematical (difficult decision)	not friendly, easy to deal with (a very difficult woman)
3		Not easy to please, not helpful (a difficult child/boss)	troublesome (you are going to be difficult about this)	
4			tough (difficult times)	

Note. The order and examples extracted by the author are from Merriam-Webster Thesaurus, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Collins English Thesaurus, and Cambridge Dictionary.

Appendix C

Examples of "Hard" (Adjective and Adverb) in *Sunshine* and *New Horizon*

Year of Junior High	English Textbook Series	
	Sunshine	*New Horizon*
1st	Ken, let's practice hard and have fun at the show. (I, p.42)	You practice soccer very hard. (I, p.33)
	Is this really ink? It's hard. (I, p.56) That's hard work. (I, p.56)	I want to be a starter, so I practice hard. (I, 54).
	I'm mashing sweet potatoes. It's very hard. (I, p.99).	At first, I was really tired after practice, but I tried hard. (I. 111)
		Did you practice hard for the relay? (I, 121)
2nd	hard/easy (II, 56)	It was hard, but I really enjoyed it. (II, 44)
	P.E. was so hard today. (II, 60)	It is necessary to practice hard. (II, 49)
	I studied hard last night. (II, 66)	
	Practicing hard is important. (II, 115)	
3rd	But John's skin was too hard for the needles to go through. (III, 46).	Because of that she was almost killed on a school bus, but many people worked hard to save her life. (III, 105)
	If you practice hard, you can be a starting player. (III, 60).	It's hard for me to get up early. (III, 39)
	We have been working hard. (III, 92).	I've been practicing very hard. (III, 49)
	I was in the shogi club and practiced hard with other members every day. (III, 107).	I've been practicing very hard to improve my corner kicks. (III, 50)
		However, Hatta worked hard to include the local people in a positive way. (III, 118).
		After 10 years of hard work, they were rewarded with success. (III, 119)

Note. I (*Sunshine* or *New Horizon* 1), II (*Sunshine* or *New Horizon* 2), III (*Sunshine* or *New Horizon* 3)

Appendix D

Examples of "Difficult" in *Sunshine* and *New Horizon*

Year of Junior High	English Textbook Series	
	Sunshine	*New Horizon*
1st		It's sometimes difficult, but she tries to do her best. (I, 89)
2nd	He tackles difficult problems through his music. (II, 72).	It was difficult, but I enjoyed it a lot. (II,40)
	Which is more difficult for you, math or science? (II, 130)	It will be difficult to finish it all. (II, 46)
		However, the weights were big and heavy, so these clocks were difficult to move. (II, 54).
		He was in a wheelchair from childhood, and often had a difficult time. (II, 78)

Year of Junior High	English Textbook Series	
	Sunshine	*New Horizon*
3rd	It's difficult for me to write kanji. (III, 8)	When you face a difficult challenge, how do you get over it? (III, 17).
	It is difficult to get up early. (III, 15)	I tried last night, but it's difficult to write haiku in English. (III, 21)
	Today AI has developed to a level that is difficult for humans to imagine. (III, 95).	It's a little bit difficult, but it's interesting. (III, 24)
	At first, it was difficult for us to sing the different parts. (III, 107)	It is difficult for endangered animals to survive in these conditions. (III, 37)
		It was difficult for them to survive. (III, 40).
		However, it is difficult to control radiation and handle nuclear waste safely all the time, (III, 107)
		Even during the difficult times of our shared history, there are people who dedicate their talent to helping others and doing good, (III, 119)

Note. I (*Sunshine* or *New Horizon* 1), II (*Sunshine* or *New Horizon* 2), III (*Sunshine* or *New Horizon* 3)

A Longitudinal Study on Japanese Learners' Written Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency

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Most traditional EFL writing classes in Japan, have over-emphasized data collection of exam scores, completion of homework or e-learning modules (Harwood, 2019; Iwasaki et al., 2019). Little research has been conducted about improvement in students' writing over a period of time (Hokamura's (2018); thus, this paper reports on the results of changes in Japanese EFL students' writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) in a span of one academic school year. Research questions focused on differences in grammatical errors and syntactic complexity between a control group, wherein students wrote three essays, and a treatment group, wherein students wrote eight papers over an academic semester. Specifically, the study aimed to find out if there were significant improvements in grammar accuracy and syntactic complexity between the first and second written drafts as well as, if there was any significant difference with the use of self-editing and grammar online checkers between the two groups. A significant difference was found between the groups in regard to syntactic complexity, and fluency, which oscillated with clauses per T-unit, increased 3.2% on average. Furthermore, grammatical errors decreased over the year for the treatment group, and improvements in syntactic complexity were found to be significant for both groups. The use of online grammar checkers was confirmed to result in fewer errors. Overall, the study indicates that EFL writing (CAF) is impacted by instruction and that more attention is warranted regarding EFL writing classes.

従来のEFLライティングの授業では、ほとんどの場合、試験の点数や宿題の完成度、Eラーニングのモジュールなどのデータ収集が過度に重視されてきた。一定期間にわたる生徒のライティング向上に関する研究は、ほとんど行われていない。本報告は、1年間における日本語EFL生徒のライティングの複雑さ、正確さ、流暢さ（CAF）の変化に関する研究である。研究課題は、対照群（1学期間に3本の小論文を書いた生徒）と処理群（8本の小論文を書いた生徒）の文法的誤りと構文の複雑さの違いに焦点を当てた。具体的には、第1稿と第2稿で文法の正確さと構文の複雑さに有意な改善が見られたかどうか、また、自己校正と文法オンラインチェッカーの使用について両群の間に有意な差が見られるかどうかを調べることを目的とした。構文の複雑さに関しては、両群間に有意差が認められ、流暢さはTユニットあたりの節数により揺れが見られたが、平均3.2%増加した。また、処理群では、文法的ミスは1年間で減少した。構文の複雑さについては、対照群、処理群ともに、有意に向上した。また、オンライン文法チェッカーの使用により、間違いが少なくなることが確認された。全般的に、本研究は、EFLライティング（CAF）が指導による影響を受けており、EFLライティングの授業に関して更なる注意を払う必要があることを示している。

Keywords: writing; syntactic complexity; accuracy; fluency; editing

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In current classrooms, quiz and exam scores, completed homework assignments or e-learning modules are often the focus of a curriculum causing many EFL educators to mistake the 'forest for the trees' in second language acquisition (SLA). The forest represents the students' total communication ability and interaction performance, while the trees represent these various goals or homework assignments. In EFL writing classes, often the focus has been on 'tree of accuracy' instead of syntactic complexity, and fluency (number of words written in a specific time). It can be argued that while accuracy has been given a relatively great deal of attention in the classroom, syntactic complexity, and fluency in writing are frequently not fully addressed due to pedagogical practices and norms.

Most EFL grammar materials infrequently address syntax and syntactic complexity, with students familiarizing themselves with simple, compound, and compound-complex sentence patterns while rarely being forced to explore and develop others; Ortega (2003) discusses how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners often exhibit limited syntactic complexity in their writing. This limitation is attributed to instructional materials and practices that emphasize simpler sentence structures, such as simple and compound sentences. This, of course, can result in students simply not having sufficient opportunities to engage with more complex syntactic forms. Fluency, the last construct in CAF, is rarely considered and evaluated in the classroom, except through timed writings; yet, the need for students to do research like, data gathering, taking notes, and write a research paper in a timely fashion cannot be overstated as research facilities, and governmental entities will all require writers to meet deadlines.

This paper is partly based on Hokamura's (2018) longitudinal research into the development tendencies of students' CAF focusing on the interconnection between complexity, accuracy and fluency in students' writing and how they improve over time. Hokamura found major peaks in learners' CAF growth, and how CAF components interact over

time. Her data showed that the participants' CAF altered over time as expected by essential properties of dynamic systems and that the three CAF categories were rarely positively associated with one another.

The relevance of performing longitudinal studies of individual learners is highlighted in this study. While Hokamura's study (2018) was limited to two students; this study had ten participants from Hiroshima University who wrote from three to ten essays over the course of a year. Furthermore, the aim was to better understand the dynamics of the writing process and to better understand the role of editing and proofing which was not previously studied. These results can help to guide educators to better recognize the complexity of students' writing.

Syntactic Complexity

Syntactic complexity refers to correctness, accuracy and fluency (CAF) components, which are classified in several ways, with complexity being defined as " progressively more intricate language and a wider spectrum of syntactic patterns" (Foster & Skehan, 1996, p. 303). The quality of L2 writing (as judged by raters) is influenced by both writing and language skills; however, only a few areas of syntactic complexity have been studied in relation to L2 writing quality. Foster and Skehan used overall length measurements, with the mean length of T-unit (MLTU) being the most common, followed by mean length of sentence (MLS), and mean length of clause (MLC).

Syntactic complexity does not always evolve in a linear fashion as measured by the subordination ratio but can extend in other ways as well, such as through phrasal and clausal complexification Kuiken and Vedder (2019). Yuan and Ellis (2003, p. 2) agreed, stating "Measures of complexity are frequently dependent on the amount to which subordination is obvious;" for example, per T-unit or per c-unit, the number of clauses. In some circumstances, type-tokens have been used to assess lexical difficulty, but clausal subordination (finite) has also piqued interest, with clauses per T-unit (C/TU) being a common metric. The findings from these tests in the past are mixed, (Ortega, 2003): in some cases, they were found significant (e.g., Homburg, 1984; Kameen, 1979) and in others, non-significant (e.g., Larsen-Freeman & Strom, 1977; Nihalani, 1981).

Accuracy

Interlanguage error correction has been a long pedagogical focus for educators (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998), with applied linguistics distinguishing between two types of errors: performance errors (made by rushed or exhausted learners) and competence errors (mistakes caused by insufficient learning). Gefen (1979) later referred to performance errors as mistakes while Selinker (1972) was the first to identify the learner's "interlanguage" and the problem of fossilization, emphasizing the influence of the learner's native language, interlanguage, and target language on the L2.

Similarly, Richards (1971) identified four major types or causes of intralingual (developmental) errors: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule constraints, insufficient application of rules, and hypothesized erroneous notions. Richards (1974) further recognized seven sources of errors: (a) interference, (b) overgeneralization, (c) performance errors, (d) markers of transitional competence, (e) communication and assimilation methods, and (f) successions of approximative systems, and (g) universal hierarchy of difficulty. There can be a great deal of interlingual transfer from the native language in the early stages of learning a second language. In addition, Shumann and Stenson (1974) suggested reasons for errors as: insufficient target grammar acquisition, limits of the learning/teaching context, and those caused by common language performance obstacles such as inter- and intra-lingual issues.

Fluency

Fluency is defined as the number of words or structural units a writer can include in their writing in a given length of time (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998, p. 14). Individuals with fluent writing skills, (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001; Kaufer, Hayes, & Flower, 1986), produce more texts in less time although the rate/time method is frequently chastised for ignoring essential factors like lexical difficulty and readability. It has been pointed out that writers aim to write as many words as possible in the time provided, regardless of word difference or density, or the text's comprehensibility The rate/time method is frequently chastised for ignoring essential factors like lexical difficulty and readability. A common criticism has been that writers aim to generate as many words as possible in the time provided, regardless of the difference or density of the words used or the text's comprehensibility. One of the key characteristics of fluid writing, according to both experts, is the ability to produce a range of word combinations and sentence patterns. Fluent writing can be defined as the process of writing the greatest number of language units in the shortest amount of time while also paying attention to accuracy, the coherent and consistent structuring of ideas within the text, and the complex use of words and sentenc-

es, based on the foregoing information. The construction of a definition that encompasses all fluent writing capabilities is closely tied to the means to measure these abilities. The ability to write a high-quality text with a considerable number of words in a short amount of time has been loosely defined as the rate/time approach to fluent writing.

Rationale

To comprehend the overall change in student L2 compositions over an academic year, it is necessary to first identify and comprehend why individual factors such as complexity, fluency, and correctness may peak or show minimal improvement. It is not clear how the three CAF components interact and evolve over time. Because the three dimensions must be evaluated together to understand their interactions and how they influence one another, this study will address this gap.

One of the most important characteristics of dynamic systems is their interconnection. While numerous studies are being undertaken in the field of education, it is critical to know how effective first-year English language classes are at private and public colleges in Japan. Because such programs cost a great deal and need a lot of oversight, planning, and evaluation in terms of grammatical accuracy and TOEIC scores, little is known about Japanese students' real skills in L2 composition and how they progress over a school year.

Research Questions

The research queries are as follows:

1. Is there a significant difference in syntactic complexity and grammatical accuracy between the control group and treatment group?
2. For the treatment group, do scores for syntactic complexity and fluency significantly increase over the year? Similarly, do grammatical errors decrease over the year?
3. Is there a significant improvement between the first drafts and second drafts for syntactic complexity for both the control and treatment groups?
4. In comparing the first and second drafts of both the control and treatment groups, is there any significant difference in grammatical accuracy?
5. How do self-editing and use of online grammar checkers affect differences, if any, in the grammatical accuracy (frequency of errors) between the two groups

Participants

Ten Japanese students participating in a writing course at Hiroshima University, ages 20 to 22, joined the study University permission was obtained in April and May, following national university guidelines. COVID-related procedures strictly impacted participation.

Procedures

Eight students joined the control group that submitted three papers for the academic year, whereas two students joined the treatment group that submitted eight essays each month. The intent was to determine if more writing practice will yield better results. In both groups, students in both groups were further divided into users of self-editing or online grammar checks to revise their second drafts.

Data Collection: Essays

Data collection was conducted from May 2020 to January of 2021; a total of 35 essays were collected and examined. The background and goals for each theme were provided to instructors who then worked theses assignments into their own curriculum. For example, a control group of eight students submitted one paper per month for a total of three months whereas the treatment group submitted eight papers (one paper per month) for a total of eight months. 15 minutes were given to revise each paper.

Data Analysis

Since the overall framework of the study is based on CAF, a syntactic complexity analyzer (Lu, 2010) was used to analyze nine structures and 14 syntactic complexity indices of the text. Grammatical accuracy focused on error-free clause ratios (EFCR), clauses with errors / 100 words. Fluency was measured by word count for both drafts. Statistical analyses were conducted comparing the papers gathered from the classes. As the sample size is limited, non-parametric procedures were utilized, relying on t-tests and computation results gather from a L2 syntactic complexity analyzer (L2SCA) (Lu, 2010).

Results

For the first research question, there was a significant difference between the groups; a two-tailed t-test at 0.05 alpha showed syntactic complexity in the first draft being (M = 9.96, SD = 14), $t(-1.79) = 2.144$, $p = 0.09$ and in the second draft, (M = 13.3, SD = 14), $t(1.80) = 2.144$, $p = 0.09$.or accuracy, results showed, (M = 7.77, SD = 8), $t(-0.107) = 2.306$, $p =$

0.016) and (M = 12.87, SD = 8), $t(-1.09) = 2.306$, $p = 0.305$), for the first and second drafts, respectively. See Table 1 for the raw data for both groups. Results indicate that more EFL instruction does impact writing outcomes when it comes to syntactic complexity and in improving accuracy.

The results show that complexity increased over time from paper 1 to paper 8 for the treatment group, and more complexity was noted in the edited drafts. Accuracy scores, however, showed no improvement, and seemed to be related to the topic, as observed in a marked decline from papers 1 and 6. Scores for syntactic complexity and fluency significantly increased over the year; fluency did increase over time as well but with oscillations. While C/T (clauses per T-unit) increased 3.2% on average, and from one paper to the next, a regressive slope of 0.0008 was noted. Furthermore, CP/T (Coordinate phrase per T-unit) did not change significantly, and

Table 1

Raw Data for Both Groups (Control and Treatment)

Paper	Indicator	First draft		Second draft	
		Control group	Treatment	Control group	Treatment
Syntactic complexity					
Paper 1	Complex T-unit	1.42	1.54	1.52	1.42
	Clauses	28.33	50.00	51.00	30.00
	Coordinate phrase per T-unit	0.49	0.33	0.30	0.48
	Mean length for T-unit	13.90	12.80	12.85	13.90
	T-unit per sentence	1.15	1.18	1.20	1.16
Paper 6	Complex T-unit	1.63	1.84	1.84	1.65
	Clauses	28.00	39.50	39.50	28.50
	Coordinate phrase per T-unit	0.35	0.42	0.42	0.34
	Mean length for T-unit	16.53	17.30	17.50	16.88
	T-unit per sentence	1.10	1.16	1.16	1.11
Paper 8	Complex T-unit	1.72	1.84	1.92	1.83
	Clauses	37.50	52.00	52.50	37.00
	Coordinate phrase per T-unit	0.43	0.45	0.47	0.41
	Mean length for T-unit	15.62	15.55	16.10	15.82
	T-unit per sentence	1.28	1.33	1.29	1.30
Accuracy					
Paper 1	Error-free clause (EFCT)	0.57	0.43	0.69	0.72
	EFCT (total)	15.50	16.00	36.00	37.50
	Errors / 100 ratio	5.09	4.41	5.95	5.38
Paper 6	Error-free clause (EFCT)	0.42	0.44	0.58	0.64
	EFCT (total)	12.33	13.17	23.00	25.50
	Errors / 100 ratio	7.75	7.10	5.80	5.05
Paper 8	Error-free clause (EFCT)	0.58	0.63	0.65	0.66
	EFCT (total)	21.67	23.33	38.00	38.50
	Errors / 100 ratio	6.10	4.79	5.21	5.31

Note: ECFR refers to error-free clause ratio whereas EFCT denotes error-free clause total.

a regression slope showed a decline, while mean length of T-unit (mean length for T-unit) significantly increased. For T-unit per sentence, a significant increase was observed with a change of 1.28% in the slope. Table 2 shows the slope and CAGR, (compound annual growth rate); the raw data are shown in Table 3, and a graphic displaying the changes in syntactic complexity and fluency over time is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Changes in Syntactic Complexity and Fluency Over Time

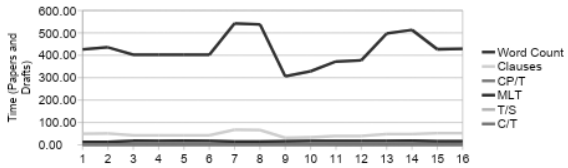

Table 2

Results for Fluency and Syntactic Complexity Over the Academic Year

Factors	Variables	Slope	CAGR
Fluency	Word count	1.1728	0.08%
Syntactical complexity	Complex T-unit	0.0008	3.21%
	Clauses	–0.0147	0.70%
	Coordinate phrase per T-unit	0.0015	5.41%
	Mean length for T-unit	0.1280	3.33%
	T-unit per sentence	0.0016	1.28%

Table 3

Fluency and Syntactic Complexity Raw Data for All Papers

	Fluency		Syntactic complexity			
	Word count	C/T	Clauses	CP/T	MLT	T/S
Paper 1	426.00	1.54	50.00	0.33	12.8	1.18
	435.50	1.52	51.00	0.30	12.8	1.20
Paper 2	403.00	2.02	42.50	0.53	18.10	1.13
	402.00	1.99	42.00	0.53	18.00	1.13
Paper 3	403.00	2.02	42.50	0.53	18.10	1.13
	402.00	1.99	42.00	0.53	18.00	1.13
Paper 4	542.50	1.82	67.50	0.26	14.45	1.25
	538.00	1.77	66.00	0.24	14.30	1.25
Paper 5	306.00	1.68	31.00	0.42	16.55	1.11
	328.50	1.78	33.50	0.47	17.35	1.11
Paper 6	372.50	1.84	39.50	0.42	17.30	1.16
	377.50	1.84	39.50	0.42	17.50	1.16
Paper 7	497.00	1.67	47.50	0.41	17.85	0.80
	513.50	1.65	48.00	0.39	18.15	1.20
Paper 8	427.00	1.84	52.00	0.45	15.55	1.33
	428.50	1.92	52.50	0.47	16.10	1.29

Regarding the third research question, grammatical errors in treatment group decreased over the year, as did both EFCR and EFCT(Total) and Errors / 100 ratio. An outlier was observed in the second draft of Paper 7 which significantly changed the slope of regression). A slope with coefficient of –0.003 was obtained by removing the outlier, suggesting that this indicator also decreased over time. See Figure 2 for graphic data relating to changes in errors over time, and Table 4 for raw data.

Figure 2

Changes in Errors Over the Academic Year

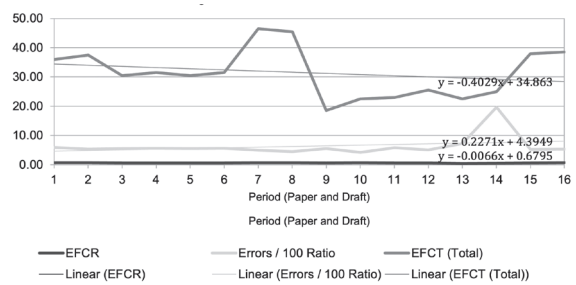

Table 4

Raw Data for Accuracy Variables for All Essays

	EFCR	EFCT (total)	Errors / 100 ratio
Paper 1	0.69	36.00	5.95
	0.72	37.50	5.38
Paper 2	0.60	30.50	5.56
	0.65	31.50	5.61
Paper 3	0.60	30.50	5.56
	0.65	31.50	6.61
Paper 4	0.69	46.50	5.01
	0.69	45.50	4.47
Paper 5	0.57	18.50	5.58
	0.67	22.50	4.19
Paper 6	0.58	23.00	5.80
	0.64	25.50	5.05
Paper 7	0.45	22.50	7.25
	0.51	25.00	19.70
Paper 8	0.65	38.00	5.21
	0.66	38.50	5.31

As for the fourth research question, significant changes between the first and second drafts were observed indicating improvement in syntactic complexity for both the control and treatment groups. Results of t-test analysis d are as follows: differences for the control group between the first and second drafts (M = 9.96, SD = 4.0), $t(-1.47) = 2.776$, $p = 0.2144$), for the treatment group (M = 13.2, SD = 4.00), $t(-1.91) = 2.776$, $p = 0.1281$), and (M = 11.51, SD = 4), $t(-1.64) = 2.776$, $p = 0.175$); see table 5 for descriptive data.

Table 5

Descriptive Data for First and Second Essays

Variables	First essay	Second essay	% change
Control group			
Complex T-unit	1.59	1.63	2.80
Clauses	31.28	31.83	1.78
Coordinate phrase per T-unit	0.42	0.41	–4.06
Mean length for T-unit	15.35	15.53	1.18
T-unit per sentence	1.18	1.19	1.18
Treatment group			
Complex T-unit	1.80	1.81	0.21
Clauses	46.56	46.81	0.54
Coordinate phrase per T-unit	0.42	0.42	0.00
Mean length for T-unit	16.34	16.53	1.19
T-unit per sentence	1.13	1.18	4.13
Both groups			
Complex T-unit	1.69	1.71	1.50
Clauses	38.47	38.88	1.07
Coordinate phrase per T-unit	0.42	0.41	-2.17
Mean length for T-unit	15.81	16.00	1.18
T-unit per sentence	1.16	1.19	2.54

The data for the fifth research question showed significant changes relating to the improvement in grammatical accuracy between the first and second drafts for both groups, as can be seen in Table 6, (specifically a difference in errors / 100 ratio, with the EFCT totals).

Table 6

Changes Related to Grammatical Accuracy

Indicator	First	Second	Change
Control group			
Error-free clause (ratio)	0.52	0.50	–4.24%
EFCT (total)	16.50	17.50	6.06%
Errors / 100 ratio	6.31	5.43	–3.96%
Treatment group			
Error-free clause (ratio)	0.60	0.65	7.05%
EFCT (total)	30.69	32.19	4.89%
Errors / 100 ratio	5.74	6.91	20.46%
Both groups			
Error-free clause (ratio)	0.56	0.57	1.47%
EFCT (total)	23.18	24.41	5.33%
Errors / 100 ratio	6.04	6.13	1.42%

A t-test revealed differences between the first and second drafts for the control group (M = 7.77, SD = 2.0), $t(-0.05) = 4.320$, $p = 0.9584$), (M = 12.3, SD = 2.00), $t(-2.05) = 4.3027$, $p = 0.1768$) for the treatment group, and (M = 9.92, SD = 2), $t(-1.11) = 4.30$, $p = 0.3803$) for the control group. Regarding the final research goal, a significant difference in grammatical accuracy was observed between those who self-edited and those who used an online grammar checker; (M = 7.68, SD = 15.0), $t(1.22) = 2.1314$, $p = 0.2383$) (see Table 7).

Table 7

Difference in GA Between Self-Editing and OGC

Paper	Draft	Self-editing	Online grammar checker
Paper 1	First	6.65	3.96
	Second	5.64	3.67
Paper 2	First	10.20	0.92
	Second	10.30	0.92
Paper 3	First	10.20	0.92
	Second	10.30	0.92
Paper 4	First	5.14	4.87
	Second	4.50	4.43
Paper 5	First	8.80	2.35
	Second	6.90	1.47
Paper 6	First	7.38	7.15
	Second	6.65	6.52
Paper 7	First	9.80	4.70
	Second	7.40	32.00
Paper 8	First	6.63	5.13
	Second	6.45	3.39

Discussion

These results indicate that more writing practice (as was the case with the treatment group) does help improve writing; however, with regard to fluency and syntactic complexity results were negligible, with fluency increasing from a mean of 319.38 in paper 1 to 351 in paper 8, while MLT for complexity, went from 13.63 in paper 1 to 15.60 and C/T increased from 1.16 to 1.30.

Results also suggest that teachers need to let students know how they are improving with each paper and focusing on issues relating to syntax during the course of instruction . While there was improvement noted from the first drafts to the second, particularly with those who used online grammar checkers, the area of editing and proofing remains a skill that teachers could place more emphasis on.

Conclusion

These results do show the importance of doing longitudinal studies and examining the importance of technology as it relates to the skill of writing. More work needs to be done regarding the effectiveness of online grammar checkers as it relates to grammatical forms and to syntactic complexity. The results also indicate that both fluency and syntax could be given more priority in the classroom.

Further research needs to be conducted with a more generalized population drawn throughout Japanese universities.There is a need for more studies to show how varying levels of proficiency could influence CAF change over an academic year. These can provide insights into issues like how differences in proficiency levels affect writing output, and the role of accuracy therein. In addition, it is important to compare CAF data from different EFL backgrounds. Such findings can possibly spur further investigations into the educational pedagogy and

teaching methods in these countries and institutions. As this study was limited in scope, research aims for other studies should include if there are possible gender differences in writing regarding CAF, if similar or varied topics significantly impact results, and to see if extending the time from 15 minutes for editing and proofing would signifcantly change the overall CAF of each paper.

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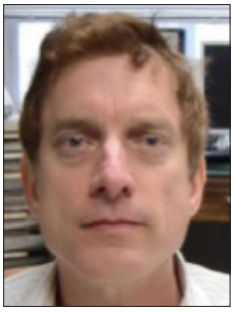

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Dispatch Language Companies at Japanese Universities: An Underexamined Relationship

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Dispatch language companies have become widespread in Japanese higher education, providing a variety of services such as filling instructor positions, operating extracurricular programs, and running accredited language departments. This article provides a background analysis of how these companies operate within the current university system in Japan. It finds that this subject has so far received little attention. Why these companies find university contracts desirable, and from the other side, why some universities find dispatch companies beneficial, is discussed. It also examines how these companies have come to play a significant role in the training and development of future instructors. The article suggests reevaluating the role of these dispatch companies and the services they provide on campus.

日本の高等教育機関では、語学教師派遣会社の利用が拡大しており、講師の補充、課外プログラムの運営、正規の語学系専攻の運営など、さまざまなサービスを提供している。本稿では、日本の大学制度の中でこれらの派遣会社がどのように機能しているかについて背景分析を行う。結果として、このテーマがこれまでほとんど研究されてこなかったことが明らかになった。これらの企業が大学との契約を望ましいと考える理由、それに対して、一部の大学が派遣会社を有益と考える理由についても考察する。また、これらの企業が将来教員となる者の指導と育成において重要な役割を果たすようになった経緯についても検証する。本稿により、語学教師派遣会社の役割と派遣会社が大学に提供しているサービスの再評価を提言するものである。

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The landscape of Japanese higher education has changed significantly since the early 1990s, including the hiring practices and academic requirements of English and EFL faculty (Hale & Wadden, 2019). In the past there was less competition, and instructors from overseas could find permanent positions with job security while possessing fewer academic credentials and publications than would be expected today. There is also a much clearer delineation in the present between an instructor position and a professor position, with a Ph.D. required for professor positions, whereas in the past an M.A. may have been adequate (Larson-Hall & Stewart, 2019; Parrish, 2015).

Further employment changes have come about due to the 2013 Labor Contract Act revision, which allows employees on fixed-term contracts for over five years to apply for an unlimited-term contract. The employer must accept this application (General Union, 2024). While implemented to increase job security for fixed-term contract employees, it has had the opposite effect overall, with universities now commonly offering contracts of no longer than five years. This has negatively impacted job security in higher education, where having an ongoing annual contract that was continuously renewed indefinitely is now essentially a thing of the past, both for part-time and full-time staff (Okunuki, 2016).

Amid all these job security and employment changes, one element has not received adequate attention: the rise of dispatch language companies operating at Japanese universities and their role in tertiary English education.

Background

EFL instructors in Japan are commonly employed in two distinct ways. "Direct hire" is when a university directly employs an instructor, which makes this individual an employee of the university. "Dispatch," or outsourcing, is when an instructor is hired by a separate dispatch company, which then sends the instructor to a university to teach English courses. These two forms of employment apply to both part-time and full-time instructors.

This dispatching encompasses a wide range of activities, from a single instructor placed in a pre-existing program, to a whole department being operated and staffed by a dispatch company with various degrees of oversight from the educational institution. Dispatch companies operate at all levels of education, from K-12 to university, with multiple companies operating in different regions and differing in their business methods, educational specialties, and employment practices (Goodhew & Kozlowski, 2021).

It is unknown how many dispatch language companies currently operate in Japan, how many

instructors they employ, and how fast this industry has grown over the years. Understandably, specific companies are hesitant to share such private information. Some are independent companies focusing on a specific dispatching service, while others are corporate subsidiaries of larger, well-known *Eikaiwa* chains. At the university level, dispatch instructors can typically teach two broad categories of courses: Extracurricular courses are essentially an *Eikaiwa* on campus, and students who desire this additional English practice must usually pay for it. Accredited courses provide students with credit upon completion, either as a required course for their major or as an elective, and these courses are part of their formal university education (Goodhew & Kozlowski, 2021).

While there is literature on the use of dispatch ALT companies at the high school level (Aspinall, 2008; Flynn, 2009; Martin, 2010; Sekeres, 2010), there is little explicitly focused on tertiary education. Butler (2019), writing on the concept of the "ronin" teacher and how one can make a living as a "full-time part-timer," mentions that dispatch companies are increasingly competing with part-timers for courses at many universities. Milliner (2017), writing on the lack of support part-time English instructors receive while being the bedrock of many university programs, remarks that the growing trend of using dispatch companies worsens their plight. Parrish (2015), writing from a career development perspective, comments that employment through a dispatch company can be a way for aspiring teachers to sidestep universities' requirements that all instructors possess a graduate degree.

Kozlowski (2020), drawing on his previous experience as a salesperson and administrator at a dispatch company, has presented on how dispatch companies gain access to universities and attempt to expand their influence once established on campus. He states that dispatch companies find university contracts desirable, as they provide a steady stream of income, with additional benefits such as name recognition for the company and a work schedule for instructors that may allow them to be assigned to multiple jobs a week. It is perhaps one of the few sectors within the private language school industry that consistently turns a profit. From the other side, universities find dispatch companies beneficial, as once the service or program of instruction has been determined, the company manages all administrative, HR, and day-to-day teaching operations. These companies can also provide additional peripheral services that the university traditionally may have little experience with, such as study abroad programs, online programs, and test preparation (Kozlowski, 2020).

Implications for Instructors

For direct-hire instructors currently employed at universities, the mere mention of dispatch companies may elicit immediate concerns about their employment security and future opportunities, as Butler (2019) and Milliner (2017) have stated. It is true that, with a finite number of accredited courses being offered at a university at any given time, any course taught by a dispatch employee is one less taught by a direct hire. It may be incorrect, however, for the direct-hire to assume that the potential antagonism between the two is centered on cost. While dispatch employees make much less than their direct-hire peers, the price the dispatch company charges the university is significantly higher than the instructor's wage. This markup is used to fund their day-to-day operations, pay the salaries of non-teaching support staff, and turn a profit for the company. Instead of cost savings, the primary benefit these companies provide universities is easing administrative burdens (Kozlowski, 2020).

Dispatch companies have also come to play a significant role in the training and development of future university instructors. These aspiring instructors commonly find themselves in a catch-22 situation—almost all direct-hire positions require some previous university experience, but how does one gain this initial experience if they have never worked at a university? Dispatch companies, in contrast, will typically hire those who have teaching experience but not at the university level (GaijinPot Jobs, 2022; Westgate, 2024). Consequently, unless instructors gain this university experience before moving to Japan, a common career path in the current job market is to obtain a graduate degree, work for a dispatch company to gain this required experience, and then transition to direct-hire employment. Working at a dispatch company has thus become, for many, a necessary step on this path.

Implications for Administrators

The appeal of these dispatch companies to university administrators is very understandable. Once the scope of the contracted service has been determined, the company performs all administrative, HR, recruitment, and employee-management functions. Sometimes the university has a clear plan and may give the company a pre-made syllabus for the dispatch instructors to follow. In other cases, the university and the company will work together to create a syllabus that works for both entities (Kozlowski, 2020).

What must be remembered is that these companies, as for-profit entities, are primarily motivated

by revenue, or in the case of university dispatching, by retaining and perhaps increasing their current teaching contracts. Their primary interest is keeping the university satisfied with their services, not the education of the students taught by their dispatch instructors.

However, this relationship is further complicated because, as these dispatch companies are motivated to keep their contracts, they often engage in more quality control than direct-hire university departments. Their lesson plans are systematic and structured in a way that instructors know exactly what they are supposed to do at every stage. Teacher observations are regularly conducted so the company knows whom they want to rehire and who needs additional teaching practice. These companies often have a university-facing support staff with a much better understanding of what is happening week-by-week in the classroom throughout the semester. This profit incentive may keep the standards and educational outcomes of the courses high (Goodhew & Kozlowski, 2021).

Future Directions

Regarding the categories of courses taught by dispatch companies, the distinction between extracurricular and accredited courses should not be overlooked. The fact that dispatch instructors are allowed to teach accredited courses without possessing a graduate degree—only permitted to do so by the university because they are not direct-hire employees—seems like an employment loophole that should be closed. Currently, there are university students in Japan who have taken multiple English classes for credit, as required for their major or as general education language credits, and unknown to these students these classes were not only 1) taught by dispatch instructors, rather than university faculty, but 2) taught by instructors that perhaps did not possess a graduate degree as generally required. Certain accreditation standards and minimum requirements should be held consistently throughout the university system. It is somewhat ironic that this is occurring at the same time as the academic credentials required for direct-hire positions are generally increasing.

One possible strength of dispatch companies may be in their ability to offer general or specialized extracurricular courses to highly motivated students and those with specific goals. These courses can, at times, be paid for or subsidized by the university (Campus English, 2024a). Many universities already provide "English Lounge" sessions, with direct-hire instructors obligated to attend a certain number each week. However, as these duties are in addition to their standard teaching load, these sessions are frequently low on the list of priorities for the instructor. Dispatch companies may be able to provide a more enhanced and focused program by enlisting instructors who can be fully dedicated to its implementation (Campus English, 2024b).

Conclusions

The rise of dispatch language companies operating at Japanese universities is an underexamined development that warrants further attention. The relationship between universities, the companies, the instructors, and the administrative staff is complex. At every university where a dispatch company operates, there is a unique relationship defined by the services provided and the distinctive role the company serves. However, general observations on this relationship can be made at the systemic level.

Regarding potential avenues of further research into these dispatch language companies, one possible approach would be for examinations from the perspective of teacher identity, especially of instructors who had previously been dispatch employees but have now become direct-hire instructors. There is some literature on transitioning from a different teaching context to the university level: Hooper writes on the experience of transitioning from *Eikaiwa* to university from the perspective of 11 surveyed instructors (2019) and his own (2018). Ferrier (2018) writes on his own experience transitioning from ALT to university. Unfortunately, no comparable literature exists on the experience of university dispatch to university direct-hire. Hopefully, future research can shed more light on this underexamined aspect of EFL tertiary education in Japan.

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An Interview With Dr. Ryuko Kubota

Amy Lin

Nagoya City University

Welcome to the May/June issue of TLT Interviews! For this issue, we feature an interview with Dr. Ryuko Kubota, who is a Professor at the University of British Columbia in Canada. Dr. Kubota had experience teaching English in junior and high school in Japan before she received her PhD in Education in Canada. She then taught at universities in the US before her current position at UBC. Her recent research focuses on critical approaches to anti-racism and intersectional justice. She has also published in these areas in English and Japanese. She was interviewed by Wan Jung (Amy) Lin, who has taught English in Japan to all age groups for more than a decade and is currently a lecturer at Nagoya City University. Her recent research interests include social justice in language education, translanguaging, and multiculturalism. Without further ado, to the interview!

Amy Lin: Thank you for the insightful plenary speech on Justice Affirming Language Teaching Through Praxis. As your expertise lies in anti-racism and social justice in language education, could you provide a clear definition of racism?

Ryuko Kubota: Racism manifests in different domains. Many of us are likely to be more familiar with interpersonal or individual racism, which is typically associated with microaggressions: racist actions and comments that people do or say to harm others, which directly or indirectly affect their feelings, dignity, and opportunities in society. On the other hand, systemic or institutional racism operates within institutional structures. For example, in educational institutions like universities and schools, we can examine the under-representation or over-representation of racial groups of people such as faculty members and teachers. We can see such skewedness beyond education in social institutions such as the government, hospitals, entertainment, newsrooms, and others.

Another form is epistemological racism, which is embedded in our knowledge systems. This type of racism raises questions about whose perspectives are represented in the syllabi, textbooks, and academic texts. For example, how are people of color and their perspectives included in the curricula of English language teaching?

This issue extends beyond English language teaching and can be examined in the teaching of other languages. In Japanese language teaching, for instance, instructional contents dominantly reflect the mainstream Japanese people and their perspectives. It often excludes the experiences and perspectives of groups such as ethnic Koreans or Indigenous peoples. These omissions demonstrate epistemological racism.

Moreover, in academic publications, it is still common to see prominent European scholars cited more frequently, many of whom are white and male. This raises the question "Can we intentionally cite women or women of color in our papers?" As researchers, it is crucial to be mindful and intentional of whose voices we amplify.

Let me give you an example. I work with Sister Scholars with whom I publish and present in academic venues. In our recent publication, we wanted to cite only women and women of color (Sister Scholars, 2023). While we did include a few male allies, the focus was primarily on women. This was a very different intellectual exercise. We wanted to be intentional about whose voice we wanted to amplify in our scholarship.

Another practice I implement in my class is diversifying the authors of the reading assignments. Instead of picking well-known authors, I try to include a variety of voices from diverse backgrounds.

In my graduate course, we have peer seminars, where students in small groups are asked to present the required readings of their choice and lead discussions in class. As part of the presentation, I ask them to introduce the authors with their photos. This practice has also helped me realize how I had unconsciously included more white male scholars than scholars of color in my past syllabus. These intentional efforts are critical in creating a more inclusive and representative scholarship.

I have also observed racism in Japan's education system, particularly toward racialized and transnational educators. I recalled reading this discussion in your book Eigo Kyōiku Gensō (Myths in English Language Education) (2018) about the persistent assumption, "nihonjin (Japanese race and nationals) speak nihongo (the Japanese language)." Would you say this reflects the nihonjinron concept (discourse of Japanese uniqueness)? Can you give us more context on it?

In the 1960s, as Japan's economy began to flourish, some scholars from the West started to pay attention to the miracle of the Japanese economy. Many speculated that the economic success was tied to the uniqueness of Japanese culture. Intellectuals increasingly began to publish on *nihonjiron*, or how unique Japanese culture, language, and people are. The discourse is still prevalent, and that has been appropriated by the Japanese political right, intending to preserve and promote the traditional values of the mainstream Japanese.

But the focus on cultural uniqueness has overlooked minorities and marginalized groups in Japan. For example, little attention has been given to ethnic Koreans and indigenous peoples living in Japan as well as other minority groups. The lack of acknowledgment and understanding of these groups is a serious problem. It has contributed to the marginalization of these people and systemic discrimination against them.

Then, in the 1980s, as Japan experienced trade frictions with the United States, the government began to realize that Japan needed to become more *kokusaika* (internationalized). The *kokusaika* discourse was later morphed into neoliberal ideology with an emphasis on cultivating *gurōbaru jinzai* (global human resources). However, this push for internationalization stimulated fears that might undermine Japanese national identity. These concerns ultimately led to the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education in 2006, where fostering love of the nation was explicitly introduced as an educational goal (see Kubota, 2019). The Japanese discourse of internationalization promoted the view that the purpose of learning English should not be only gaining receptive skills. It is to disseminate Japanese unique perspectives and values actively to the world.

How does this racialized and nationalized concept lead to racism in language teaching and learning in Japan? Do language learners tend to use this ideology to reflect on their language learning?

There is a prevalent ideology of standardized English and the concept of legitimate English speakers, which must be disrupted. To challenge this, my colleague, graduate students, and I created a documentary film titled *World Englishes: Voices in Canada* (n.d.). We filmed it during the COVID-19 pandemic, so some interviews were conducted online and filmed by us rather than produced in a professional manner. So, the video quality is not as sophisticated as we expected, but we tried to include diverse voices in the documentary as professionally as possible. The documentary consists of five episodes: (a) Linguistic Diversity; (b) Standard English and the Role of English; (c) Negative Experiences; (d) Language and Race; and (e) Embracing Diversity.

Our aim was to offer critical perspectives on the interrelationship among language, race, colonialism, and ideologies to the viewers, hoping to transform their knowledge and attitudes toward linguistic diversity. The documentary film is available online, free of charge, to use for any purpose. There are sample discussion questions on the website. Subtitles are available in two formats: an auto-generated version by YouTube and a verbatim version transcribed by us.

The documentary can allow our students to grasp more perspectives about World Englishes rather than the standardized English. How do you think teachers can utilize the documentary in the classrooms? How can we demonstrate the reality of the diversified Englishes to our students?

There are many ways to use this documentary film strategically in the classroom or as part of the assignment. The key is to raise new awareness. Educators can encourage students to develop critical awareness through viewing and discussing the video. Outside of the classroom, students can be encouraged to increase their awareness by observing how diverse people express their thoughts with language and how they say certain things in the media, entertainment, or real life. Next, they can turn their awareness into action. Encourage them to go out and interact with people who speak different Englishes, whether face-to-face or via online platforms. All these experiences and activities can be critically reflected upon through notetaking,

self-recording, or journaling, which can be shared in the classroom for further discussion. This type of reflective experiential learning can deepen their understanding of the diversity of language and language users, as well as identities tied to it.

Meanwhile, many parts of the video can be interpreted in different ways. With the same video clip, teachers and students can uncover alternative discourses and perspectives about the heterogeneity of English and English users. Hearing from both so-called native and non-native speakers address critical issues in language learning could open up rich discussions.

The videos can also invite students to experience or reflect on language ideology. They can empathize with the interviewees in the videos. How do they feel if they don't see themselves as legitimate speakers of English? Should they stop speaking in English altogether because they can't speak like a native speaker? How would that affect their career and lifestyle? Do they unconsciously silence themselves because they cannot reach the standard they set for themselves? Can they empower themselves and overcome their anxieties? If you are interacting with L2 users, in English or Japanese, how would you react to their unique ways of using the language? You can also invite students to critically examine what they think and how they feel after watching the video.

We should also encourage students to think beyond English language learning by considering, for example, immigrant children in Japan learning Japanese in local communities or minoritized groups navigating in Japanese society. Do they have a voice in their community? This focus may inspire students to interact with people from different backgrounds and engage in the local communities. I hope they have more opportunities to learn from these multilingual and multicultural groups of people. In the future, when these students go abroad to study or work, they may also experience what these people do in Japan. Such empathy building is useful for developing intercultural awareness and competence.

As we discussed diversity in English education, indigenous languages are rarely addressed in language education in Japan. I grew up in Taiwan, and I have heard voices where heritage speakers may not find it motivating to learn the heritage and indigenous languages or lack the purpose of learning them. What are your thoughts about this?

In discussing this, we need to understand that the purpose of language learning is not only to expand our economic capital to get a good job. It is also about connecting with our local communities for intergenerational wellbeing through preserving and affirming our identities. This is a big part of language education. That's why indigenous groups don't usually use the term "language learning" because it implies acquiring pragmatic skills to manipulate language structures. Instead, expressions like language reclamation and revitalization more appropriately describe the activity. Language and culture combined together become part of indigenous identity. This is an alternative understanding of language and language development.

What are the biggest obstacles to reaching diversity, equity, and inclusion in language education in Japan?

I think we need a grassroots movement to fight against the conservative politics that oppose these values. Interested and concerned teachers should come together because this cannot be done alone. We need a community to discuss strategies and develop concrete ways of implementing these ideas in the classrooms and empowering students to become agents of change.

This will take time, but young people are receptive to new ideas and are creative. I truly hope that the younger generation will grow to be fair and open-minded and deeply engaged in issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

How can we share these messages concerning critical social issues with language teachers in higher education and primary and secondary schools?

There are professional groups and associations in Japan that target primary and secondary teachers concerning these issues. One organization is New English Teachers' Association (or *Shin-Eiken)*, which is known for its progressive stance on these issues. I have participated in their conference a couple of times. I noticed that many teachers are deeply engaged in topics, such as environmental issues, peace education, and other social issues. Professor Emeritus Haruo Erikawa at Wakayama University is a regular member and is known for his critical research on the politics and history of English Education in Japan. There are other organizations and conferences that educators can join to foster connections with practitioners and researchers, including Japanese scholars and teacher educators in language education who are striving to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Of course, JALT provides excellent opportunities for professional connections, too. What's different is that many JALT members are expatriates, whereas other Japanese organizations probably do not have many members who are L1 English speakers, sharing different perspectives. Language teachers in cross-organizations can collaborate and share

visions. That way, we may be able to create professional synergies for a change.

I am also interested in associations for critical language teachers and global applied linguistics. Approaches to applied linguistics research in Japan seem to be predominated by quantitative methodology. Qualitative research is underrepresented. As a consequence, research tends to overlook the politics and ideologies in language education. In that sense, Professor Terasawa Takunori is another outstanding scholar in Japan. As a sociolinguist, he is one of the critical scholars of English language education and published many books in Japanese and articles in English. Therefore, some critical perspectives are out there, but there's no organized force to mobilize critical scholars and promote public scholarship. It would also be nice to organize a professional association for critical approaches to language education. It would also be exciting to have a documentary film about diverse Japanese speakers in real life, moving beyond standardized Japanese, something like the Japanese version of the documentary film, *World Englishes.*

What can we do to encourage the students to get out of the bubble and see the world differently?

Nowadays, technology allows us to see the world by watching different YouTube videos and other online resources. Students can also interact with people around the world. Encouraging this kind of interaction is one way of learning about diversity.

Many YouTube channels offer useful contents that include different varieties of Japanese and English. For example, there are street interviews in English and Japanese with people from diverse backgrounds, many of whom are not so-called native speakers. One YouTube channel that I sometimes use in my class is run by That Japanese Man Yuta. In one video, Yuta interviewed Asian male native speakers of English about how they are treated in Japan (2018). One interviewee, an Australian of Cambodian and Chinese descent, shared how people often guessed his background incorrectly because of the way he looks. He also shared that he was probably treated better than Asians with darker skin tones. Another interviewee, a Canadian teacher of English of Pakistani descent, shared his experience of being stopped by a police officer multiple times in Japan, seemingly because of his skin color. In fact, racial profiling has been reported by many foreign residents of color in Japan and has recently become a lawsuit (Sakai-Irvine & Ida, 2024; Kageyama, 2024). Their stories can be useful resources for teachers to use in class in order to examine racism in Japan.

Talking about racism in Japan, I presented at the spring conference of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ) in 2022, discussing how racism is addressed in some Japanese novels published recently. One of the works I highlighted was by Gregory Khezrnejat, an American novelist who writes in Japanese. His short stories reflect his experiences working as an ALT in the JET Programme, and they are fascinating and thought-provoking.

This is an excellent example of breaking the traditional image of "Japanese novelists" and challenging the notion of native speakerism. It reminds me of studying Joseph Conrad's works in college. He did not fit into the category of so-called native speakers either, yet his literary works profoundly influenced English literature.

In my AATJ presentation, I also mentioned a novelist, Li Kotomi. She is Taiwanese and started learning Japanese when she was in junior high school. She majored in Japanese at National Taiwan University and came to Japan in 2013 to study for her master's degree at Waseda University in teaching Japanese as a second language. She began writing fictions in Japanese and her novel, *Higanbana ga Saku Shima* (*The Island Where Nirvana Flowers Bloom*: 2021), won the 2021 Akutagawa Prize, one of the highest literary awards in Japan. She used translanguaging or hybrid linguistic forms in the characters' lines in this novel, including the *Yonagunijima* language, Japanese, Taiwanese Hokkien, and Mandarin. It demonstrates the richness of communication in a fascinating way.

During my AATJ talk, I discussed Li Kotomi's other novel, *Hoshi Tsuki Yoru* (*Star, Moon, Night*). The story is situated in Japan and depicts a romantic relationship between a Taiwanese female teacher of Japanese as a second language and a Uyghur female student studying Japanese. The Uyghur woman wanted to escape the discrimination she suffered from in China, yet she was still discriminated against in Japan because of her background, including her non-Han-Chinese name. As for the Taiwanese teacher, she didn't want to be discriminated against due to her Japanese-like appearance, which compelled her to speak with the "standard Japanese accent" in professional settings.

This is sharply contrasted by *Tangusu* (*Tongues*), a short story written by the aforementioned author, Gregory Khezrnejat. The main character is a white American English teacher in Japan who accepted a part-time job as a fake minister for a wedding company after losing his *eikaiwa* teaching job. As a fluent user of L2 Japanese, he was making a living as a translator, too. When he was asked to practice reading the script for a wedding service, he tried to

showcase his fluent Japanese. However, the trainer stopped him, requesting him to speak with an English accent. He said, "If the customers ask for perfect Japanese in the wedding, they may as well hire a Japanese minister. They came here for a *gaijin* (foreign) minister."

Here we see the expectations totally opposite between the Taiwanese teacher of Japanese and the white American fake minister. These are interesting examples of how power produces intersectional privilege or oppression involving race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and social status (Kubota, 2023). The questions we should ask are: Why are these expectations different? How do these expectations affect the ways we learn English or other languages? What kind of expectations do Japanese learners of English face when they interact with diverse people in different global settings? If they mastered standardized English, would they be respected in white-dominant anglophone countries despite the way they look? How can we encourage our students to affirm multilingualism, diverse speakers' voices, and anti-racism? These questions will expand our horizon toward more equitable and inclusive ways of communicating across difference.

As we conclude the interview, do you have messages for language educators in Japan to approach anti-racism and social justice? What are our roles and goals in education?

The change should happen within ourselves—our ways of thinking and doing. We need to reflect on our thoughts and actions constantly. Of course, we may make mistakes. Everyone does. We must be kind to ourselves and others. At the same time, we have the responsibility to educate students to become responsible global citizens who affirm and protect human dignities and make the world a peaceful and sustainable place for everyone.

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Lorraine Kipling

We welcome submissions for the My Share column. Submissions should be up to 600 words describing a successful technique or lesson plan you have used that can be replicated by readers, and should conform to the My Share format (see the guidelines on our website below).

Email: jaltpubs.tlt.my.share@jalt.org • Web: https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare

Welcome to My Share, the TLT *column where readers share their original classroom activities for the benefit of our community!*

We welcome submissions from veterans and newbies, so if you have devised or developed an activity that you'd like to share, I invite you to take a look at our Submission Guidelines (which you will find with our digital edition on the TLT *site at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare), and feel free to get in touch with me at jaltpubs.tlt.my.share@jalt.org.*

This issue we have three engaging activities that encourage students to get to know each other, take time to think, and explore some complex topics through music. First up, James Henry's Top Secret Research ice-breaker activity helps students to ask the right questions and listen carefully to get the information they need. Next, James Rankin asks students to take each other down Memory Lane and practice thinking-time phrases. And finally, Michelle Nemoto uses the Red Hot Chilli Peppers song, California Dreamin', *as a prompt to evoke emotions and discuss the darker side of the Golden State.*

Thanks, as ever to our contributors for sharing their work. I hope you might find the activities useful, and that they might inspire you to put forward your own submission!

—Best wishes, Lorraine

Top Secret Research: A Dynamic Icebreaker for Day 1

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Quick Guide

» Keywords: *Icebreaker, student interaction, information gap, first day activities*
» Learner English level: *Elementary to advanced*
» Learner maturity: *High school and above*
» Preparation time: *30 minutes*
» Activity time: *30-35 minutes*
» Materials: *Survey handouts (one unique handout per student), whiteboard, markers*

Creating an engaging classroom atmosphere on the first day is essential to establishing rapport and setting the tone for active participation. Drawing on principles from task-based language teaching (Nunan, 2004) and communicative language teaching (Richards & Schmidt, 2010), I have developed an activity called Top Secret Research: a twist on the classic Find Someone Who, which ensures varied linguistic output, encourages critical listening, and keeps students motivated.

Preparation

Step 1: Create unique survey handouts for each student. Each survey should have fifteen personal information survey prompts using the following patterns:

- Basic yes/no prompts: "_____ has a pet"
- Negative prompts: "_____ doesn't like spicy food"
- Open-ended prompts: "_____'s favorite movie is _____"

To create variations between surveys, you can modify one element of a phrase. For example, "_____ was born in Hyogo" can be changed to "_____ was born in Mie." I have included three example handouts in the Appendix with suggested variations.

Step 2: Prepare activity rules, ready to display:

- Handouts are TOP SECRET - do not show to others
- English only
- Each name can only appear once
- You must interact with different classmates
- Write "Nobody" if no one matches a prompt

Step 3: Write "Top Secret Research" on the whiteboard and create a two-column table labeled "Name" and "Information" (4-5 rows).

Step 4: Prepare sample prompts in the table's right column that mirror the handout format.

Procedure

Step 1: Welcome students to their first class. Tell them they are going to become research investigators to learn interesting things about their new classmates through a special interview activity.

Step 2: Select 4-5 volunteers and have them stand with their backs to the board. Tell them that they must not look at the questions on the board, as the survey is Top Secret!

Step 3: Point to one of the survey prompts and elicit the question from the class. For example, for "_____ has a pet," the question is "Do you have a pet?"

Step 4: Model the information-gathering process by asking one of the volunteers this question. If they don't have a pet, continue asking the volunteers until somebody says "Yes."

Step 5: On the whiteboard, write the student's name (or "Nobody") in the left column, so the prompt is now complete (e.g., "Genta has a pet.")

Step 6: Model the other example prompts as above, until you have checked that students know how to form questions for each prompt type.

Step 7: If necessary, demonstrate the "Nobody" option using another example prompt (e.g., "_____ was born in February.") Ask volunteers "What month were you born in?" After no one answers "February," explain "I asked everyone, but nobody was born in February, so I'll write Nobody here."

Step 8: Tell students that they will now conduct their own Top Secret investigations.

Step 9: Distribute handouts and tell students that everyone's handout is different. Nobody knows what questions the other students have, and you must not show your handout to each other!

Step 10: Give students a moment to check their handouts, and make sure they know how to ask their questions. Support, as necessary.

Step 11: Set a timer for 20-25 minutes and tell students to start their investigations.

Step 12: While students work, monitor English use, encourage movement and interaction, and remind students not to show their papers, as necessary.

Step 13: Conclude with a brief sharing session, inviting students to share interesting discoveries about their classmates.

Conclusion

Top Secret Research is an effective icebreaker that creates a lively classroom atmosphere. The grammar focus can be adjusted to students' needs, while the investigative task encourages higher engagement among new classmates. This activity successfully prioritizes meaningful interaction while providing flexible opportunities for language development.

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Appendix

The appendix is available from the online version of this article at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare

Time to Think: Memory Lane

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Quick Guide

- Keywords: *Thinking time, past tense, responding to questions*
- Learner English level: *Intermediate and above*
- Learner maturity: *High school and above*
- Preparation time: *30 minutes*
- Activity time: *20 minutes*
- Materials: *Playing cards (numbers 1-6), slides or handout with Memory Lane questions (see Appendix).*

Students often struggle to make thinking time feel natural while answering more complex questions. This accessible activity can improve students' ability to fill silences while indicating they will take their turn in a conversation. Students open a conversation by asking their partner a question about their past and then follow up with a series of randomized questions that require a little thinking time. This activity could be good practice for speaking tests, such as IELTS Parts 1 and 3, both of which are 4–5 minutes long and may benefit from natural thinking time language.

Preparation

Step 1: Choose a couple of topics about past experience that will be familiar and engaging to your

student group. Themes could include schooldays, childhood toys/cartoons, recent trips.

Step 2: Create a few question sets for each theme in level-appropriate English. Each set should have an opening question with a broad theme followed by six numbered questions that will ask for more detailed responses. For example:

Opening question 1

Where did you go to elementary school?

Follow up questions

1. Who was your favorite teacher? Why?
2. What was your favorite school lunch? Why?
3. What did you usually do during lunch breaks?
4. What did your pencil case look like?
5. Do you have a good sports festival memory?
6. Where did your class go on a school trip?

Step 3: Make a list of 'thinking time' phrases. For example – 'Let me see…', 'Let me think…', 'That's a good question…', 'That's a difficult question…'

Step 4: Prepare a slide, handout, or shareable online document with the question sets and 'thinking time' phrases (see Appendix).

Step 5: Set up a timer of some form so the students will know when their five minutes is up.

Procedure

Step 1: Explain that students will interview each other and practice phrases that will help them create thinking time to answer questions.

Step 2: Practice / Review the 'thinking time' phrases. Brainstorm any alternative phrases.

Step 3: Hand out (or share) the prepared questions (see Appendix), and have students review the topic and questions in pairs.

Step 4: Divide the class into pairs and hand each pair playing cards numbered 1-6 shuffled into random order.

Step 5: Explain that after the opening question, the order follow-up questions are asked is determined by the random order playing cards are turned over. Explain that one 'interview' should last 5 minutes and contain as much detail as possible. Reassure them that it is OK if they cannot ask and answer all the questions in that time.

Step 6: Demonstrate the activity with a volunteer by telling them to ask you a question and then flip a card to select a follow-up question for you to answer. For example, for the topic of schooldays, the student asks, 'Where did you go to elementary school?' You might answer, 'I went to Chester Elementary School.' The student then flips a 2 card, and asks 'What was your favorite school lunch, and why?'. You then indicate thinking time by saying 'Let me see…', before answering 'My favorite school lunch was spaghetti bolognese. It was more interesting than chips or pizza.'

Step 7: Start the timer and ask the students to ask the opening question to their partner. Monitor and assist, as necessary.

Step 8: Give a one-minute warning when appropriate. When the time is up, reset the timer while the pair shuffle and turn over their deck of cards. The pair swaps roles and the activity begins again with a fresh opening question.

Extension

As the class proceeds, provide new 'topics' in the form of opening questions and have students create their own original follow-up questions.

Conclusion

This Memory Lane activity provides a practical way for students to improve their thinking time skills while practicing giving specific details in the past tense. It allows students to share information with their classmates, allowing them to talk about common experiences in their past, helping with class engagement and peer bonding.

Appendix

The appendix is available from the online version of this article at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare

California Dreamin' vs. Reality: Exploring Hollywood Through Music

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Quick Guide

- Keywords: *Cognitive health, motivation & engagement, cultural understanding*
- Learner English level: *Intermediate to advanced*
- Learner maturity: *High school and above*

» Preparation time: *5 minutes*
» Activity time: *60-90 minutes*
» Materials: *Pre-task discussion questions (Appendix A), lyrics gap-fill handout (Appendix B), answer sheet (Appendix C), projector, links for music video/audio and lyrics (see References)*

Music can enhance motivation and engagement in ESL, creating an immersive language-learning environment (Engh, 2013). Music not only evokes emotions but also reduces language-learning stress, making it a powerful tool for lowering anxiety (Kasap, 2023). The song *Californication* was chosen, as it contrasts California's dream with its darker realities, offering stimulating opportunities for discussion. The activity is easily implemented, regardless of the teacher's musical background.

Preparation

Step 1: Prepare copies of the handout.

Step 2: Prepare pre-task questions on the themes of the lesson. For example, "What music genres do you like/dislike?", "What do you know about Hollywood?" (See Appendix A for more examples).

Step 3: Ensure access to the *Californication* YouTube link (Red Hot Chili Peppers, 2009).

Procedure

Step 1: Project pre-task questions onto the board (Appendix A).

Step 2: Introduce the questions, providing example answers (e.g., "I listen to music every day, especially pop and rock," or "California has beaches and the Golden Gate Bridge").

Step 3: Divide students into groups of four to discuss the questions. Monitor and support.

Step 4: Explain to students they will listen to a song called *Californication* that explores the darker side of Hollywood, beneath its glamorous exterior. Tell them not to worry about unknown vocabulary at this stage.

Step 5: Distribute the worksheet.

Step 6: Play the song and tell students to fill in the gaps.

Step 7: Play the song again and encourage students to discuss their answers with a partner.

Step 8: Play the song a third time, check answers as a class, and discuss any new vocabulary.

Step 9: If time permits and the students are keen, play the song again and sing along.

Step 10: Have students discuss phrases in the song that they think show challenges and problems about fame and Hollywood (e.g., "Pay your surgeon well to break the spell of aging" refers to plastic surgery). Some possible phrases are highlighted in blue on the answer sheet (Appendix C).

Step 11: Discuss as a class. Encourage students to share real-life examples or name celebrities connected to plastic surgery, drug use, or other issues mentioned in the song.

Extension

Ask students to choose a place they know well or want to visit, then write about its positive and negative qualities. Intermediate students can write 2-3 sentences, focusing on one positive and one negative aspect, while advanced students can write a paragraph (or longer) with a clear topic sentence and supporting details for both aspects.

Conclusion

This lesson fosters motivation and meaningful discussions, preparing students to engage with the world on a deeper level. By using the engaging power of music, students explore the contrast between the dream of California and its darker realities, enhancing both language skills and cultural understanding.

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Appendices

The appendices are available from the online version of this article at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare


Sarah Deutchman & Edward Escobar

In this column, we discuss the latest developments in ed-tech, as well as tried and tested apps and platforms, and the integration between teaching and technology. We invite readers to submit articles on their areas of interest. Please contact the editors before submitting.

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AI-Assisted Learning: Crafting Ethical and Effective EFL Writing Assignments

Jesse Reed

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes more prevalent in education, EFL teachers face new challenges and opportunities. One example is how large language models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT, provide instant text generation, which can assist students with brainstorming, drafting, and revision. However, concerns remain about academic integrity, an over-reliance on AI, and diminished critical thinking skills (Han et al., 2023). Without proper guidance, students may incorporate AI-generated content without mindfulness, limiting their ability to develop independent writing skills (Vanderpyl, 2012). Additionally, AI-generated text lacks nuance, originality, and reliability, often reflecting biases present in its training data (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020). Therefore, one important goal is teaching students to evaluate AI-generated text critically. Instead of accepting AI suggestions at face value, students should be encouraged to revise and justify modifications (e.g., show understanding of errors, active involvement in revisions, and understanding of the results). Therefore, assignments should focus on process over product, ensuring that students remain actively involved in the development of their writing, rather than relying on AI to generate content for them. This article presents my approach to AI integration, emphasizing scaffolded assignments, critical engagement, and accountability measures to help students develop both AI literacy and essential writing skills.

Integrated Curriculum Model

The first stage of the course focuses on brainstorming and outlining where AI assists with generating ideas and organizing main points. However, students must refine and justify their selections (Han et al., 2023). Then, it moves onto drafting: students write independently, using AI selectively for sentence structuring or vocabulary enhancement (Smutny & Schreiberova, 2020). After this students will focus on peer review and revision, where they will have structured feedback sessions to help students critically assess both human and AI-generated suggestions while refining their work (Han et al., 2023). In larger classes, organizing small-group discussions or rotating review sessions ensures that every student receives meaningful feedback without overwhelming the instructor (Smutny & Schreiberova, 2020). Finally, students will submit their final draft, along with a reflection on how they used AI throughout the process (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020).

Checks are included in this type of curriculum to prevent AI misuse. Students will be required to produce AI interaction logs that document the AI-generated suggestions, indicating which recommendations were adopted, modified, or rejected (Han et al., 2023). Additionally, through process reports (i.e., brief reflections on how they used AI during drafting and revision), students can demonstrate their active role in shaping their work (Zhang et al., 2024). Oral interviews (i.e., one-on-one discussions) can help verify that students are internalizing writing concepts and not merely relying on AI outputs (Vanderpyl, 2012). Other checks can include in-class presentations, where students can present segments of their work and explain how AI influenced their revisions to reinforce accountability and provide instructors with opportunities for feedback. Table 1 is an example of an AI-integrated writing curriculum.

Addressing AI Challenges and Classroom Limitations

Integrating AI into writing instruction can be challenging for many reasons. For instance, AI-generated content may inherit biases from its training data and oversimplify complex ideas. This means that students must learn to critically assess and refine AI output, rather than accepting its output at face value (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020).

Table 1

AI-Integrated Writing Curriculum Timeline (14 Weeks)

Stage	Timeframe	AI Involvement	Key Activities
AI introduction & ethics	Weeks 1-2	Minimal	Discuss AI's role in writing, ethical considerations, and bias awareness. Students analyze AI-generated samples for accuracy and reliability.
Brainstorming & outlining	Weeks 3-4	Moderate	Students use AI for idea generation and outline creation. AI-generated outlines are peer-reviewed for structure and coherence.
Drafting (student-led)	Weeks 5-6	Low	Students write initial drafts with limited AI assistance for vocabulary and phrasing. AI cannot generate full text.
Peer review & AI feedback	Weeks 7-8	Moderate	Structured peer feedback with AI-assisted grammar/sentence structure suggestions. Students justify changes.
Revising & refining with AI	Weeks 9-10	High	AI is used for sentence-level refinements, clarity, and structure. Students must track and explain AI-driven changes.
Final drafting & instructor feedback	Weeks 11-12	Moderate	Students revise based on instructor feedback and use AI selectively to improve coherence and argumentation.
Final submission & reflection	Weeks 13-14	Moderate	Students submit their final work with an AI usage report, reflecting on when and how AI helped or hindered their writing.

Additionally, though AI can suggest alternative phrasing and generate sample texts, its responses sometimes lack a deeper understanding of certain topics. This requires human oversight to ensure that AI serves only as a starting point for student revisions (Han et al., 2023). As the quality of AI output is highly dependent on the input it receives (e.g., varying quality of text used to train the AI), students need to understand that AI can produce language of inconsistent quality and coherence. Therefore, developing effective prompt engineering skills is necessary for students to receive more relevant and nuanced assistance from AI (Zhang et al., 2024).

Practical classroom constraints are also a concern. Large class sizes can limit the possibility for personalized feedback, making group-based review sessions and structured peer feedback important. Additionally, student proficiency levels can be very different, requiring different levels of scaffolding to develop their independent writing skills (Smutny & Schreiberova, 2020). Effective time management is another challenge, as educators must integrate AI tools without compromising other critical aspects of the curriculum. All of these factors must be considered for this approach to be effective.

Future Considerations

Advancements in generative AI are rapidly reshaping educational practices. This offers the potential for more personalized writing instruction, adaptive learning environments, and strategies tailored to individual student needs (Han et al., 2023). However, as AI tools become more advanced and commonplace, there are concerns about its overreliance on technology, reinforcement of biases, and a diminishing of students' critical thinking skills (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020).

Current research on AI-assisted writing instruction demonstrates the need for new frameworks that evaluate the quality of students' final texts, along with the development of their writing skills and critical reasoning over time (Zhang et al., 2024). Thus, future studies should explore how different models of AI integration impact long-term learning outcomes and determine whether structured AI usage supports learning.

Finally, ongoing professional development is essential for educators to stay aware of technological advancements. Instructors must update traditional pedagogical approaches to include training in AI literacy and prompt engineering. This will help ensure

that students benefit from AI as a tool for learning, while continuing to build their fundamental skills.

Conclusion

Integrating AI into EFL writing instruction offers opportunities for enhancing the writing process, though it also poses significant challenges. AI tools can support brainstorming, drafting, and revision, but they must be integrated into a structured framework to ensure that students continue to develop writing skills independently (Han et al., 2023; Vanderpyl, 2012). When used responsibly, AI can provide valuable scaffolding without replacing critical thinking and creativity (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020).

However, educators must remain vigilant about the limitations of AI, such as its potential to reinforce biases or produce inaccurate content. Ongoing research, including recent systematic reviews (Zhang et al., 2024), highlights the need for assessments that measure the quality of final texts and the development of writing processes. Additionally, practical classroom strategies—such as peer review, AI interaction logs, and tiered tasks—can help mitigate challenges such as large class sizes and varied student proficiency (Smutny & Schreiberova, 2020). Ultimately, balancing AI's benefits with traditional pedagogical approaches is essential for developing effective, independent writers in an increasingly digital learning environment.

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Listening Practice With YouGlish.com

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Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill in language acquisition, and is perhaps one of the most important for language students (Rost, 2011). Despite its importance, listening often receives less instructional time than reading, writing, and speaking in many language classrooms. Teachers frequently prioritize speaking and grammar-based lessons, leaving students with insufficient practice in processing spoken language (Field, 2009). Even when listening activities are included, they often involve passive listening to scripted dialogues, which do not reflect the variability and complexity of real-world spoken language. Furthermore, listening activities are not always time efficient. Traditional approaches, such as playing an entire recording followed by comprehension questions, may not optimize students' exposure to key vocabulary and structures. Instead of meaningful engagement, students may spend a disproportionate amount of time struggling with unfamiliar accents, rapid speech, or unclear audio quality. While there are numerous audio resources available online, teachers often struggle to find targeted examples of specific words and phrases in authentic contexts. The audio components of textbooks tend to be long; many of the audio exercises in textbooks used by this author exceed 4 or 5 minutes. This can be especially difficult for lower-level learners, not only because of the large amount of information, but also in how different such segments are from a natural conversation with shorter segments of speech, pauses, speaker changes, etc. (Ur, 2016). This article will focus on the benefits and drawbacks of the adoption of YouGlish to address the above issues in the context of a Japanese university.

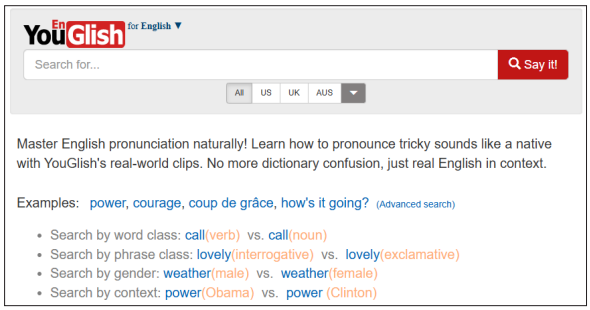
Using YouGlish to Generate Shorter and More Specific Segments

YouGlish.com, a video search engine that provides video-based examples of words and phrases in real speech, offers a solution (see Figure 1). Words can be searched by regional accent (US, UK, Australian, etc.), word class, phrase form, topic, context, and a speaker's gender. This allows for highly specific searches that help learners focus on key vocabulary in context.

By filtering searches by part of speech, accent, and sentence type, teachers can ensure students receive exposure to the language in varied, authentic settings. This specificity aids comprehension by reinforcing how words function within a variety of grammatical structures. This differs from the usual approach many textbooks use of pre-teaching vocabulary terms and including an audio file which may contain each word a single time—a practice found to be less effective than other methods (Chang & Read, 2006). Additionally, exposure to multiple speakers prevents students from becoming overly reliant on a single voice or accent, an issue often found in traditional textbook audio recordings.

Figure 1

A Variety of Available Search Criteria



Benefits and Drawbacks

One of the primary benefits of using YouGlish is the ability to provide learners with authentic language input in a manageable format. Unlike traditional listening exercises that may feature lengthy dialogues, YouGlish allows teachers to break content into smaller, more comprehensible segments, reducing cognitive overload and helping lower-level learners focus on key aspects of pronunciation, word usage, and sentence structure. This approach aligns with Nation's (2013) assertion that repeated exposure to vocabulary in varied, meaningful contexts enhances retention and deepens students' understanding of word usage.

However, there are also drawbacks to using YouGlish. As the tool relies on an extensive database of publicly available videos, some clips may contain unclear audio, strong regional accents, or additional vocabulary that is too advanced for lower-level learners. Another challenge is the lack of subtitles in some videos, which can make comprehension difficult for students who rely on written support. Finally, because many of the videos are sourced from public speaking presentations (such as TED Talks), the topics can sometimes be rather boring for students. Nevertheless, these issues can be mitigated by strategically selecting and scaffolding activities around the chosen content, properly selecting clips that align with instructional goals and the target audience.

Classroom Observations

YouGlish can be used in various ways, offering flexibility in classroom settings. In this author's experience, one of the most effective methods has been integrating YouGlish into paired or group dictation exercises. Students are given a set of vocabulary words to listen for, and as they hear them in video clips they transcribe these words or phrases. This approach aligns with findings that demonstrated that frequent dictation enhances listening comprehension in EFL learners (Kiany & Shiramiry, 2002). Another method involves students predicting a word's usage before watching videos. For example, after introducing the term "sustainability," students are asked to guess how it will be used before searching for examples on YouGlish. This has led to increased engagement, as students actively anticipate language structures. Additionally, incorporating accent recognition into activities has proven to be a fun and educational component. Students often enjoy the challenge of distinguishing between American, British, and Australian accents, further refining their listening skills. Initial student reactions to YouGlish were mixed: some students found the interface overwhelming due to the vast number of search results, while others appreciated the control over playback speed and repetition. Over time, students became more comfortable with the tool, particularly after guided practice sessions. The lack of subtitles in some videos was initially a challenge; this was mitigated by selecting clips with clear articulation and pausing videos for discussion. In the long term, students reported greater confidence in understanding spoken English, particularly in recognizing words in natural speech rather than relying on scripted dialogues.

Conclusion

YouGlish offers a valuable resource for enhancing listening instruction in the language classroom. By allowing learners to engage with shorter, contextually relevant speech samples, it helps bridge the gap between artificial textbook recordings and real-world spoken language. Furthermore, it promotes the development of vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation awareness, and comprehension of various English accents. Student feedback suggests that while initial exposure to the tool can

be overwhelming, familiarity with its features and guided exercises contribute to a more positive and productive learning experience over time. While some limitations exist, such as unclear audio or potentially advanced vocabulary, these challenges can be addressed through careful selection of clips and structured scaffolding. The flexibility of YouGlish enables it to be integrated into various classroom activities, from dictation to accent identification exercises. Future research could explore its long-term effects on listening proficiency and whether repeated exposure to natural speech patterns leads to measurable improvements in comprehension skills. For educators seeking an alternative to traditional listening exercises, YouGlish presents a compelling and adaptable solution.

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[JALT PRAXIS] YOUNGER LEARNERS


Martin Sedaghat & Emily MacFarlane

The Younger Learners column provides language teachers of children and teenagers with advice and guidance for making the most of their classes. Teachers with an interest in this field are also encouraged to submit articles and ideas to the editors at the address below. We also welcome questions about teaching, and will endeavour to answer them in this column.

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Just Stay and I'll Do the Read and Choose: Children and Extensive Reading Motivation in an Eikaiwa

Lesley Ito

Over the years, most teachers of children that I've met were avid readers when they were young and assumed that their students would be the same. I taught myself to read and was the kind of child who would walk into walls because I was simultaneously trying to read a book. Entering a library was exciting and akin to finding a treasure chest filled with jewels. Therefore, it was sometimes hard for me to put myself in the shoes of children who might not be as enthusiastic about reading books, especially ones written in a foreign language. However, I needed to do so for my school's extensive reading (ER) program to be successful.

What Is Extensive Reading?

Extensive reading is an approach where students choose and independently read a large number of books, ideally at or slightly below their reading level as a way to receive a large amount of comprehensible input and improve reading skills (Nation & Waring, 2013). In the young learner EFL context, especially in *eikaiwa* (English language conversation) classes that might only be 50 minutes long, this can be an efficient way for students to get a lot of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1992). ER can be especially valuable for returnee children coming back from English-speaking countries, who used to receive English input naturally in their daily lives and now must rely on books or other sources for that input now that they are back in Japan (Taniguchi, 2021).

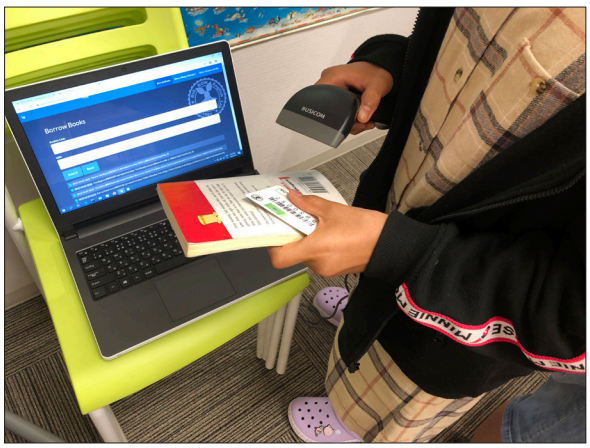
Many university ER programs have a target number of words students must meet in order to pass the class, but as *eikaiwa* schools do not have end-of-semester grades, it is imperative for them to be intrinsically motivated to read in order for the ER program to be successful (Ito, 2024). In any case, there are many studies that suggest that intrinsic motivation is the most powerful factor in getting students to read on their own in their first

or second language (e.g., Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Takase, 2007; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). As intrinsic motivation is an innate human tendency, it can only be brought out by creating an environment that supports it (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Many teachers misunderstand this important point and ask how they can motivate students to read when they should be asking how they can create an environment where students will be motivated to do so (Gambrell, 1996). Students will be more intrinsically motivated to do ER if the teacher creates an environment where reading is a fun and interesting activity, a wide variety of books at or below their level are provided for checkout, and books are arranged in an easily accessed manner.

Students at my *eikawa* school have access to over 1,000 graded readers (some with audio), leveled readers, and authentic materials from our library. As there tends to be an expectation that classes in *eikawa* schools focus on speaking and listening, sustained silent reading, meaning silently reading self-selected materials in class (Day & Bamford, 1998), would not be feasible in short *eikaiwa* classes nor receive parental support. Therefore, students check out books from the library to read at home (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Checking out Books to Take Home Using the LIXON Library System



The Action Research Project Begins

The library seemed to be active, but after reading *The Book Whisperer* by Donalyn Miller (2009), I began to wonder if there was room for improvement. Miller is an inspirational sixth-grade teacher from Texas, USA, who has her students read 40 novels a year. Her book whispering method entails learning about students' interests using a questionnaire and then recommends books for them to read. I wondered whether such an approach could work with EFL students in an *eikawa* school. An action research project was started, with the initial plan of half of the students receiving book whispering and the other half as a control group.

A baseline bilingual smiley questionnaire—a child-friendly Likert-like questionnaire using smiley faces—created using the Early Language Learning in Europe guidelines (Enever, 2011) was given to 91 young learners to begin the action research project. These students ranged in age from six to 16. There were 42 Japanese EFL students, and 49 were either returnees, graduates of international pre-schools, or had at least one parent from an English-speaking country. The questionnaire focused on attitudes on reading, reading activities in the class, the ER program, as well as how much they welcomed help from the teacher in selecting books to check out. Some of the results were very comforting: almost half said they liked reading in English, and 70% reported usually reading the library books they checked out (see Figure 2). However, the questions about receiving help from the teacher were overwhelmingly negative. Over two-thirds of the students reported that they liked choosing library books by themselves, 15% welcomed the teacher's help, and only 9% wanted more help. One interesting contradiction was that 40% said they had trouble finding books they liked, yet they did not want direct help from the teacher.

Figure 2

Students Choosing Books on Their Own From the School Library

Two separate follow-up questionnaires were sent out about receiving help from the teacher: one

questionnaire to the 75 students who gave negative or neutral responses about receiving teacher help and another to the 16 students who responded positively. Students who did not want the teacher's help had strong opinions about what they liked and wanted to choose reading materials on their own. These students felt obligated to check out what the teacher suggested and then sometimes felt resentful because their autonomy had been infringed upon. Some of the questionnaire comments were brutally honest. Examples of these are presented below:

> *I don't like insect books, but when the teacher says, "How about this insect book?" I can't say no. (translated from Japanese)*
>
> *Because I can choose my favorite books just myself.*
>
> *Just stay and I'll do the read and choose.*

Students who had a positive response of receiving help from the teacher often had trouble finding suitable books that matched their interests or reading level or wanted recommendations for something new. After reading their responses, I began to realize these were often students who successfully found a book they liked after my recommendation. Considering that students often come to school for years and I get to know them fairly well, it was shocking that my success rate was so low!

After analyzing the results of the second questionnaire, it became apparent that the initial action research plan investigating book whispering had to be scrapped, and indirect book recommendation methods needed to be researched instead. The teacher reading aloud (TRA) approach was first chosen based on a successful case study of a California teacher who read books aloud to students during class and then noticed that not only were these books more likely to be checked out by students, but it helped the class library become a shared experience (Brassell, 2003). I also implemented the peer-to-peer recommendation (PTPR) technique, which I had experience in my university classes through a book talk activity—students spend a minute verbally recommending a recently read book to classmates in small groups. Other approaches used with children were considered, such as a student-curated pupil recommendation shelf (Biddle, n.d.) or a library pocket, where students insert written book recommendations into a classmate's designated envelope (Mrs. Carter, 2010).

Second Cycle of Action Research

For the second cycle of action research, seven classes were put in the TRA group and the other seven were put in the PTPR group. Four book series were introduced at two-week intervals for the TRA group (see Figure 3). A book, or a chapter of the book was read to the students in the ten minutes before library book check-out time. Then, the books were laid face up on the table with the teacher only commenting that they were available for check out. As many of these books were checked out, my initial observation was that this was an effective way to introduce new books to the students.

Figure 3

A Series is Introduced to a Class by the Author

The PTPR group got off to a rocky start. Voice recordings of the students during library time revealed they were not spontaneously recommending books verbally to each other. "Book talk" did not go well with younger students because they complained they did not know what to say, even when given prompts by the teacher. There were also other problems with students not paying attention to the student who was speaking. Finally, a feasible solution was found: recommendation postcards. Each student made two postcards about books they recommended. Students glued a cut-out photo of them holding the book and then wrote a short recommendation. For the next month, these postcards were verbally presented to their classmates right before library check-out time and then displayed in a pocket wall chart. Although students seemed to enjoy the postcard making activity, it required a lot of work from the teacher—taking a photo of a student with the book, printing out the photo, providing sentence writing prompts, and checking the students' written work. Furthermore, it was observed that students were not consulting the postcards in the pocket wall chart when deciding what books to check out.

A final bilingual questionnaire was given to the TRA and PTPR groups one month after the in-class

book recommendation activities ended. The students in the TRA group gave very positive responses about the teacher indirectly recommending books by reading them aloud. An overwhelming majority (83%) said they liked it when the teacher read books aloud, 69% said this made them interested in the series, and 50% said it made them want to check out more books from the library. Most of the comments expressed a desire to borrow the book or series read aloud by the teacher. Students who said they liked reading in English increased by 15%, compared to the results of the baseline questionnaire.

The results of the PTPR questionnaire were also positive, but making the postcards was rated as more enjoyable (59%) than verbally recommending the book to their classmates (41%). However, a majority (59%) said they enjoyed listening to classmates recommend a book and were interested in checking out these peer-recommended books (59%). One interesting data point was that EFL students enjoyed making the postcard more and were more interested in checking out peer-recommended books than returnee students. Another interesting result was that less than half of the student comments were about recommending books to classmates, and the remaining comments were about how fun it was to make the postcard or how it was a good writing practice. It seemed the purpose of the activity—recommending books to classmates—somehow got lost. Even though students who said they liked reading in English increased by 10%, compared to the baseline questionnaire results, students who thought doing ER at home helped improve their English decreased by 15%.

Sometimes there is a large gap between what students say and what they actually do, and this was the case with the PTPR group. Book borrowing data recorded using the LIXON Library system was analyzed from two or three months before the action research project began until the end. The borrowing behaviors of the TRA students reflected their positive responses on the questionnaire. Before the action research project began, they borrowed books from the recommended series four times, but after the TRA, these were borrowed 106 times. In contrast, the PTPR group borrowed more of the recommended books before the action research even started. Of the 78 recommended books, only 12 were borrowed by students after the peer recommendation. However, 44 were borrowed before the action research project began (eliminating the student who recommended the book). Another interesting point was that younger students sometimes recommended books they had never borrowed.

Action Research Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of action research is to identify areas in the classroom that need improvement, deciding what can be researched, collecting and analyzing data, bringing about a change, and then evaluating the effects these changes brought to the learning environment (Boon, 2016). In this case, I was able to find out that TRA has a strong positive effect on my students' intrinsic motivation to do ER, as confirmed by the data on their book borrowing behaviors. It was also the method that was easiest and most efficient for the teacher to implement, requiring little preparation and only ten minutes of class time. PTPR, on the other hand, required a lot of class time and scaffolding by the teacher to make the postcards. It was also less effective because students did not borrow the books their classmates recommended and it seemed many students viewed this as a craft making/writing activity, rather than an ER one. Based on these results, the decision was made to do TRA in class at various times during the school year, especially when new books are introduced to the library.

Another finding of this action research project was how important autonomy was to the students, considering how they preferred indirect methods of recommendation by the teacher. Children feel very strongly about having the freedom to choose what they want to read. In the past, parents have wanted me to choose library books for their children or make them borrow books they deem appropriate. After conducting this research project, I was able to communicate to them how counterproductive this was and how respecting their child's autonomy would lead to more reading motivation in the long run.

A secondary finding was some methods that worked well in English-speaking countries did not in the *eikaiwa* context. Book whispering and peer-to-peer recommendation are highly regarded in research conducted in English-speaking countries and with the dearth of research on children and reading motivation in EFL, it can be tempting to assume they can be as successfully implemented in an *eikaiwa* class in Japan. I welcome more research on children and intrinsic motivation to do ER in Japan, to see if these findings hold true for other language programs in *eikaiwa* schools.

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[JALT PRAXIS] BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Taferner & Stephen Case

If you are interested in writing a book review, please consult the list of materials available for review in the Recently Received *column, or consider suggesting an alternative book that would be helpful to our membership.*

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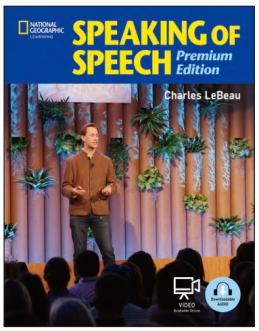
This month's column features Joyce Dong's review of Speaking of Speech, Premium Edition – Basic Presentation Skills for Beginners.

Speaking of Speech, Premium Edition – Basic Presentation Skills for Beginners

[LeBeau Charles. Tokyo: Cengage Learning, 2021. p. 128. ¥ 2,800. (Teacher's manual available.) ISBN: 978-4-86312-385-4.]

Reviewed by Joyce Dong, JALT Fukuoka



Speaking of Speech, Premium Edition: Basic Presentation Skills for Beginners is an introductory presentation textbook that explains the principles of presentation in four key messages: the Physical Message, the Visual Message, the Story Message, and the Verbal Message. Instructors teaching students of different majors may be pleased to find the presentation topics both engaging and applicable to students of pre-intermediate to intermediate levels. I used this textbook in a beginner presentation course for commerce students focusing on essential presentation skills before assigning them commerce-related topics. The textbook is easy to use and is attractive with glossy images and illustrations. Instructors would find the sample syllabus beneficial and adaptable for their own classes lasting eight, 15, or 30 lessons.

A key strength of Speaking of Speech is its ability to captivate non-native students' interests in the non-verbal, physical, and visual messages. The textbook starts with the non-verbal skills of the physical message, which got the students quickly engaged. My students enjoyed the making eye contact activities, before adding gestures for emphasis. For the visual message, instead of just telling students what a good PowerPoint slide was, the practice of analyzing PowerPoint slides to identify the problems and solutions on how to improve them, made students think more critically about slide design and layouts. Each unit was accompanied by a section highlighting the common pitfalls made in slide design, which was useful to reinforce the visual message to students on a regular basis.

Speaking of Speech is accompanied by an instructor-friendly teacher's manual with practical recommendations. The appendix gives instructors ideas on how to conduct presentations, how to conduct peer feedback, and how to arrange classroom logistics for performances and tips for visuals. The manual also offers challenges for higher ability students (under the One Step Beyond section). In this premium edition, the author has included valuable teaching tips for instructors. However, it would have been great if the sample tests could be digitalized and included on a language learning platform for quick scoring purposes. Online quizzes would likely be well-received by instructors and students alike.

As Brooks and Wilson (2014) state, teachers should be cognizant that most students are unfamiliar with the key features of oral presentations and that they need to provide students with ample scaffolding. The re-shot and updated presentation videos, along with the scaffolding steps detailed in the Performance section, provide students with a good understanding of the presentation process. After watching the videos, in the Model Presentation section of the textbook, students are prompted to pay attention to not just the content of the videos, but also the skills used in the presentation delivery.

Although most of my students found the model videos engaging and entertaining, some students commented that they were "contrived" and "slightly over-the-top." The overall filming direction seems geared towards injecting humor rather than realism into the presentations. The video felt like they were more like acting performances rather than actual presentations. It might be good to strike a balance between being interesting and realistic by including authentic examples of student presentations.

This textbook could also have highlighted cross-cultural differences in gestures to make it culturally nuanced. During the pair activity in which gestures are added to sentences, (e.g., "We want to cut cost,") I noticed cultural variations in gesturing. In addition to the verb "cut," some students gestured "cost" or "money" in a Japanese way, which differed from the western approach. As languages differ in how they express concepts lexically and syntactically, this could lead to variations in gestures, such as choosing either a single gesture or two separate gestures (Kita, 2009).

Instructors may also find that they need to make an additional effort to teach students how to deliver the verbal message, beyond the focus on voice inflections in Unit 3. Many L2 students lack "core fluency" (Jordan, 1997, as cited in Brooks & Wilson, 2014, p. 203), and without targeted instruction in skills like chunk reading, low-proficiency L2 students may struggle to present successfully. Kosaka (2024) found that they were less sensitive to the syntactic and semantic information of multiword units compared to their first language (L1) counterparts (p. 3). Therefore, including a section focused on chunk reading with video or audio examples—not just in the appendix, but also in the main textbook—would be helpful.

Overall, *Speaking of Speech* is a good start to introduce students to the four messages of a presentation. Most of my students liked the textbook and said it was easy to understand even though there were only English instructions. Instructors would find this textbook useful to make presentations fun and relevant in English classes.

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Recently Received

Julie Kimura & Derek Keever

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A list of texts and resource materials for language teachers is available for book reviews in *TLT* and *JALT Journal*. If none of the titles we have listed appeal to you or are not suitable for your teaching context, please feel free to contact us to suggest alternate titles. We invite publishers to submit complete sets of materials to Julie Kimura at the Publishers' Review Copies Liaison postal address listed on the Staff page on the inside cover of *The Language Teacher*.

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Books for Students (reviews published in *TLT*)

Contact: Julie Kimura — jaltpubs.tlt.pub.review@jalt.org

! Bedside manner intermediate: An intermediate English course for nursing—Capper, S. Perceptia Press, 2024. [This new coursebook builds on the basics of English of Bedside Manner Beginner and aims to help learners acquire the essentials for the workplace while increasing awareness and understanding of medical English vocabulary through puzzles and games. Supplementary materials, including audio, can be downloaded through the publisher's website.]

Breakthroughs: Japanese women entrepreneurs—Tanner, P. 2024. [This coursebook comprises 20 chapters based on 20 Japanese women entrepreneurs. Each chapter begins with a dictation exercise, followed by a vocabulary exercise, which helps students prepare for a 600-word reading passage. Chapters end with comprehension and discussion questions.]

! Case studies in business innovation: Readings for discussion—Benevides, M., Valvona, C., & Firth, M. Atama-ii Books, 2023. [This coursebook is for English learners at the CEFR B1 level and higher. It comprises 30 case study readings and supporting tasks. The material supports task-based, as well as project-based approaches, and is also suitable for a business English course.]

! Colour your English! Learning collocations by colouring in—Hirschman, S., & Alton Bautz, A. Perceptia Press, 2023. [Language learners dream of being able to join in with everyday conversations in real-life contexts, but it can be difficult to remember the words you need and use them naturally. This book offers a unique way of noticing, recording, and activating useful collocations: the basic building blocks of language. Each of the 12 units is centered around a location in a town, and in each unit, students review and extend collocations with common verbs and nouns while practicing listening and speaking skills.]

! Eat well! An introductory English course for nutritionists (4th ed.)—Jones, R. E., & Simmonds, B. Perceptia Press, 2024. [This 12-unit coursebook aims to provide English training to university nutrition majors. Topics include mechanics of nutrition, as well as global nutrition issues, including obesity and malnutrition. Each unit contains a reading passage, listening tasks, and language exercises. An e-learning component is available through the publisher's website.]

** Magic speaking*— Kim, C., Lee, J., & Wilburn, J. e-future, 2024. [This three-book series is written to help young learners master an elementary level of conversational English. Each unit contains ten easy-to-follow lessons, which offers ample opportunities for practice and review. Resources, such as MP3 files, flashcards, and answer keys, are available through the publisher's website.]

! Talk a ton: Speaking power—Spiri, J. Perceptia Press, 2024. [This coursebook for Japanese learners of English includes readings on comprehensible topics that form the basis for a variety of communicative activities. Learners can practice ways of exchanging information through discussions and interviews.]

** TOEFL® skills 2*— Graham-Marr, A. Abax ELT, 2021. [All three titles in this series are geared towards learners at the CEFR A2/B1 level, but this book is suitable for students aiming for an iBT score between 40 and 55. There are six topic-based units, each of which has a focus on language and a focus on the test itself. Activities that focus on language help students with the language and test-taking strategies they need for success on the test. Activities that focus on the test are done under time pressure in order to help students get used to the time constraints of the test. Audio is available through the publisher's website.]

The yellow sticker girl—Gudgeon, S. ELI Readers, 2023. [This graded reader is about a girl from the north of England whose family has big problems. Themes of the story include family, food waste, poverty, and bullying. In addition to the story, there are post-reading activities to support comprehension and productive language skills. CEFR A2. Audio download available.]

! 学習意識改革ノート:外国語を自律的に学ぶための３ヶ月プログラム—加藤聡子、善永美央子、2024.「８つの法則で学習の核心を学び３１_の _ワークで自分と向き合い、スケジュール帳で行動と感情を記録。」

Books for Teachers

Professionalising English language teaching: Concepts and reflections for action in teacher education—Cirocki, A., & Hallet, W. Cambridge University Press, 2024. [In order to promote the professionalisation of English language teaching, this book presents a comprehensive model of language teacher education and competences for the 21st century. The authors propose that teachers engage in professional learning through collaboration and shows how teacher educators and classroom practitioners can develop their practice.]

David McMurray

Graduate students and teaching assistants are invited to submit compositions in the form of a speech, appeal, memoir, essay, conference review, or interview on the policy and practice of language education. Master's and doctoral thesis supervisors are also welcome to contribute or encourage their students to join this vibrant debate. Grounded in the author's reading, practicum, or empirical research, contributions are expected to share an impassioned presentation of opinions in 1,000 words or less. Teaching Assistance is not a peer-reviewed column.

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In this issue, Lee Ka Ho shares his experiences as a TA that have helped him to learn more about the differences between various foreign language teaching strategies. Born in Hong Kong, Lee Ka Ho (also known as Ricky Lee) came to Japan in 2021 and is currently a teaching assistant while studying intercultural studies at graduate school. Although Ricky Lee admits that he has been struggling with teaching English and using Japanese in the classroom, he notes that music has helped him build trust in his relations with students.

Building Student Trust as a Teaching Assistant

Lee Ka Ho

IUK Graduate School

In this essay I will explain how I have managed to build relationships of trust with students by singing songs with them and how this has helped me to confidently teach them to speak English.

Relearning English in Japan

As a Hong Konger, learning to speak English has not been an easy task, especially when it comes to pronunciation. Even though I have been able to speak in English since childhood, lately I have been struggling to adjust my pronunciation so that I can be understood by my teachers and students in Japan. I came to Japan in 2021, hoping that people could understand my English even though I brought along my accented English from Hong Kong.

A researcher at Hong Kong Baptist University (Wakefield, 2021) argued that it is no longer possible to refer to Hong Kong English speakers as an EFL speaker, but neither could he say that they speak a fully formed new variety of English called Hong Kong English (HKE). Hong Kongers, like me, tend to seek out English-speaking social networks and choose to watch and listen to English-medium forms of entertainment, which means my English-speaking experience in Hong Kong was very ESL-like.

In Hong Kong, my relationship with my teachers was very close; I think my classmates also enjoyed friendships. However, we still maintained a serious attitude towards learning languages under the direction of the teacher in our classroom. Our relationship with teachers felt more like that of family or friends. Sometimes, during holidays when we were called to school for studying or other extracurricular activities, we would also include the teacher in holiday celebrations. For example, on Christmas, we might not go straight home. Instead, we would have a meal together or go somewhere with our teachers as a group.

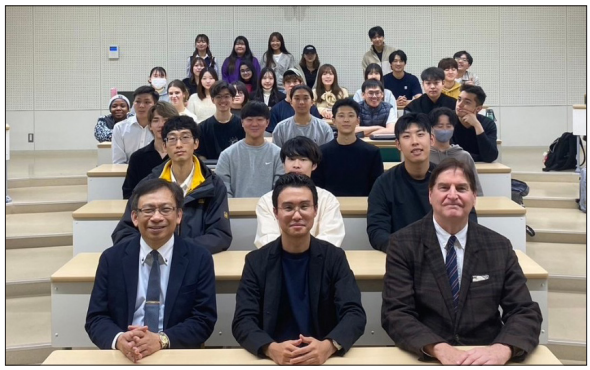
Prior to entering university in Japan, I independently set out to relearn English that is closer to standard British or American English. I listened to podcasts and CNN and BBC newscasters and watched videos, such as documentaries on YouTube. I tried to mimic their standard pronunciation and practice daily. Through shadowing exercises and watching videos, I realized that when I repeat sentences several times, I am more likely to understand the British vocabulary and grammar structures. I also began singing English songs with my Japanese classmates who loved karaoke. When singing, I chose American hit pop songs.

Active Learning English Language Classrooms

Despite my worries, I was able to get a job working as a teaching assistant (TA) in an English oral communication class. The course was 15 weeks, and there were 25 non-English majors. I was confident with my teaching methodology, using the textbook *CNN News English: Engaging College Students as Active Learners* by Yamanaka et al. (2024). I received training while visiting other universities to present short lectures in English with my seminar classmates (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

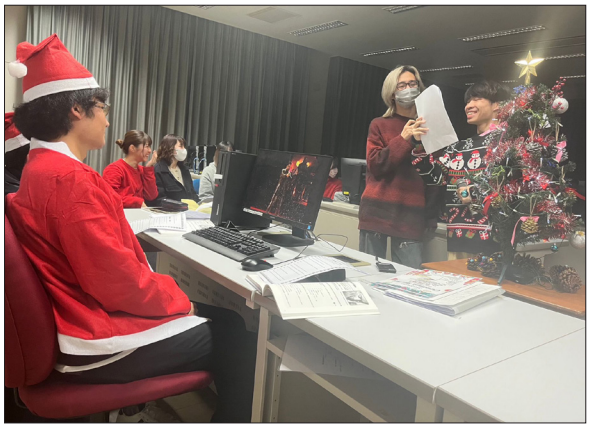
Presenting at Soka University



When it was time to assist my oral communication class, however, I noticed in the first few classes that many students lacked motivation in their English classes. I observed that several Japanese students seemed hesitant to speak out. In personal conversations, they told me they were afraid of making mistakes, so it was important for them to practice speaking and even singing in front of others to overcome this fear. As a result, I suggested to the professor in charge that we could introduce singing songs to create opportunities for the students to speak more English and improve their pronunciation. To break the ice in the classroom, I sang the hit song by Celine Dion, *My Heart Will Go On*. Then, the professor showed a clip from the movie *Titanic*.

Figure 2

Singing Christmas Songs in the English Classroom



By Christmas time, we were regularly hosting classes with singing, so we suggested to the students, especially those who had been unmotivated at the outset of the course, to challenge the theme Learning English Christmas Songs. The suggestion was surprisingly accepted, and it worked! In this popular session, the students were divided into singing groups, and each group sang a song of their choice, such as Mariah Carey's *All I Want for Christmas is You*, and *Last Christmas* by Wham (see Figure 2). This activity helped the students to build confidence and become more comfortable speaking in English in front of others.

Successful Things That I Have Done as a Teaching Assistant

I came to believe that building a trusting relationship is the most important aspect of being a good TA. If students trust their TA, they will be more comfortable and willing to communicate. Therefore, TAs must encourage students to ask questions and participate in the lesson. Otherwise, when students feel confused, they will hesitate to communicate. They might never ask questions, and as a result, their learning will be disrupted. For me, I do not think that I am any different from the first-year students I worked with because I am also a foreign language learner (in English, Japanese, and Korean). Therefore, I prefer to create a relaxing atmosphere that helps them to focus on the class easily. Sometimes, when I say something that is not clear, it makes the students realize that mistakes are a normal part of learning, which helps them grow. Over the 15 weeks of teaching English oral communication, I noticed that the students and I had become closer than at the beginning of the course. Some students have continued to talk to me in English outside of the classroom. This made me think that the distance between students, TAs, and possibly teachers should be reconsidered in schools. Without question, I believe creating a comfortable classroom atmosphere is an important responsibility of teachers. However, perhaps it is easier for the TA to accomplish this task. Apart from assisting with the learning of language, TAs must also focus on how to help students feel confident and make them see coming to school as a treasure.

Moreover, since I can now speak both Japanese and English, when necessary I can easily explain things to students in Japanese, which helps them understand the meaning of vocabulary and grammar. I can teach them more effectively because I can listen to their questions in Japanese and respond to them directly. Therefore, overcoming language barriers was one of the crucial factors that helped me become closer to students during the oral communication classes.

Teaching Assistant Drawbacks

Communicating with students in English to explain challenging vocabulary and grammatical sentences was not an easy task for me this semester. Therefore, I sometimes switched to Japanese language on a one-to-one basis to not disrupt the all-in-English environment preferred by the professor in charge of the classroom. Compared to assisting in a one-on-one style, teaching in a classroom of 25 students was quite difficult for me. Students came to the classroom with differing levels of English skills, so there was not enough time to take care of all the students all the time in a one-on-one style. In the classroom, many students were focused first on my singing and then on my teaching, but some said they found my grammar lessons difficult.

Teaching English Through a Western Cultural Lens

I originally thought of English as just a tool. However, after coming to Japan to study at a graduate school level in a department of international studies, I realized that the world is much bigger than I had imagined. According to Saunders (2024), although the 195 countries in the world are unique and different from each other, the majority of citizens have access to English as an international language (EIL). EIL allows us to connect with the world and understand other cultures, even if we only know English. As a TA in a graduate school, I think about how I can teach English in an interesting way. Because I understand English, I can explore Western countries and use my experiences to teach students, sharing what I have learned along the way.

According to Davitishvili (2017), teaching English, as well as the culture where it is used, makes the global language more relatable, enhancing both language acquisition and cultural awareness. By connecting the language to students' interests and daily lives, TAs can empower them to engage with English in a meaningful way, preparing them for real-world conversations and interactions.

Furthermore, incorporating holidays (e.g., Thanksgiving, Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, and Hanukkah) allows students to learn both English and cultural customs. Discussing food, fashion, and sports also provides opportunities to explore specialized vocabulary, for example terms related to cuisine, fashion trends, or sports idioms, such as "touchdown" or "home run."

Moreover, TAs can focus on a specific country and teach students about its culture through English. For example, if students are interested in Irish culture, we can teach them about traditional foods, drinks, music, and dances, as well as festivals and holidays in Ireland—all while using English. Not only will students learn about another country's culture, but they will also acquire new vocabulary. This approach can inspire them to engage more deeply with the English language and explore it further.

The Future

I am currently traveling in Taiwan (see Figure 3) and other countries in Asia to explore more about the world and learn more about myself. Although studying is important, I believe that travelling to new places will also broaden my cultural knowledge. Next semester I am off to Europe, where I can improve my English by talking with local people and learning more about Western cultures. By gaining new experiences, I believe that when I return to my graduate school studies in the future (see Figure 4), I will be a stronger TA.

Figure 3

A Student and the Author (right) Singing English Songs During an Overseas Internship Course

Figure 4

Logo for the Author's Graduate School

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[JALT PRAXIS] WRITERS' WORKSHOP


Jerry Talandis Jr. & Daniel Chesmore

The Writers' Workshop is a collaborative endeavour of the JALT Writers' Peer Support Group (PSG). Articles in the column provide advice and support for novice writers, experienced writers, or nearly anyone who is looking to write for academic purposes. If you would like to submit a paper for consideration, please contact us.

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Stronger Research Paper Discussion Sections: A Practical Guide

Jerry Talandis Jr.

If you are new to academic writing and find the discussion section of your research paper particularly vexing, you are not alone. This section—an essential component of academic journal articles, book chapters, and dissertations—is widely regarded by authors and editors as one of the most difficult parts to write (Nundy et al., 2022).

It is easy to see why. In the discussion, your job is not just to summarize your results, but to interpret them in relation to your research questions and the existing literature (Vieira et al., 2019). In other words, you must explain what your results mean, why they matter, and how they fit into the bigger picture, all while ensuring clarity for the average reader (Hess, 2004). By doing so, you demonstrate your understanding of the broader scholarly conversation and establish how your research contributes to it (McCombes, 2025).

To help you navigate the complexities of writing an effective discussion section, I will start by highlighting common pitfalls that writers—both novice and experienced—often encounter. These are well-documented mistakes, frequently discussed in how-to guides, university writing center resources, and scholarly articles. Once we have covered what not to do, I will introduce a rubric to evaluate a tried-and-true rhetorical structure. This will help you assess your own writing and analyze discussion sections in target journal articles, giving you a clearer sense of what makes them effective.

Common Discussion Section Pitfalls

When tackling any challenge, it helps to first consider what not to do. Below is a concise, non-exhaustive list of six common pitfalls that writers often encounter when discussing their research findings—mistakes frequently highlighted in the literature on this topic.

Simply Restating Results

One common mistake among novice academic writers is rehashing findings already presented in the results section. Instead of interpreting their results and addressing the all-important "so what?" question, authors provide little analysis or commentary. As a result, the discussion section falls flat, leaving readers uncertain about the significance of the findings—or why they should care. Avoid turning your discussion into a second results section; instead, focus on explaining and evaluating your findings, building an argument that supports your overall conclusion (McCombes, 2025).

Introducing New or Unnecessary Information

Another frequent pitfall is introducing new data or extraneous details. This violates expected conventions and weakens the clarity of key insights. Results belong in the results section—adding more data here distracts from analysis and confuses the

reader (Thomson, 2023). Similarly, veering off into unrelated issues makes it harder for readers to grasp the study's main takeaways (Hess, 2004). To avoid this, stay laser-focused on your primary message, ensuring every point reinforces your study's key insights.

Weak Integration of Previous Research

Failing to integrate previous research into your discussion is a common pitfall among academic writers. One of the main purposes of the discussion section is to situate your findings within the existing literature (Dunton, 2021). When this step is overlooked, it isolates your paper, making its significance within the broader field unclear (Charles Darwin University, n.d.). Effectively comparing and contrasting your findings with past research strengthens your interpretations and assertions, making for a more compelling and well-supported discussion (Solid Research Group, n.d.).

Overgeneralizing or Misrepresenting Findings

When discussing your research, be careful not to overgeneralize or misrepresent your findings. This occurs when claims go beyond what the data supports—a serious mistake that can frustrate reviewers and mislead readers (Hess, 2004). One common cause is viewing the discussion section as a way to "sell the paper" (Skelton & Edwards, 2000, p. 1269) through rhetoric and speculation rather than grounded analysis. This pitfall can be tricky to avoid, as interpreting results is inherently subjective—yet overinterpretation weakens credibility (Sacred Heart University Library, n.d.). Stay vigilant and ensure your analysis remains firmly rooted in your data.

Not Mentioning Your Study's Limitations

Failing to acknowledge problems or limitations in your study weakens its overall credibility. No research is perfect—there are always constraints that should be addressed (Hess, 2004). For example, you may have had a small sample size, low or inconsistent response rates, or an uncontrolled confounding variable (McCombes, 2025). While revealing weaknesses may seem counterintuitive, doing so demonstrates honesty, integrity, and critical engagement with your work (PapersOwl, 2024). If you fail to mention limitations, reviewers certainly will (Vieira et al., 2019). Instead of avoiding them, frame limitations as opportunities for future research, turning potential weaknesses into constructive next steps (Taherdoost, 2022).

Lack of Structure and Logical Flow

A final pitfall I will highlight is the lack of clear structure and logical flow in discussion sections. Instead of smoothly progressing from one point to the next, some authors jump randomly between ideas, creating a disorganized mix of unrelated information that is difficult to follow (Nundy et al., 2022). This often stems from a lack of understanding of how to structure prose in a way that conveys a clear, cohesive message (Şanlı et al., 2013).

In fact, many of the pitfalls discussed in this column trace back to this fundamental issue: structural awareness. Without a strong grasp of discussion section conventions, writers struggle to organize their ideas, integrate research effectively, and maintain logical flow. In the next section, I will introduce a structured approach that will help you assess and improve your discussion writing.

A Framework for Assessing Discussion Sections

Now that we have covered what not to do when discussing research findings, let's shift toward a constructive approach using a tried-and-true structural formula. Even though there is no single best way to organize a discussion section—as styles vary by discipline and subject—the six-point framework from Dunton (2021) provides an excellent foundation, particularly for research involving the collection and analysis of qualitative or quantitative data (see Table 1).

To develop a deeper understanding of this structure, Dunton (2021) suggests applying this framework not only to your own writing, but also to analyze discussion sections in articles from your field. This is an excellent idea, so to help you, I have created the following rubric (see Table 2).

Apply this rating scale to each element in a discussion section from a paper you have written and reflect on its effectiveness. For example, start with how you have presented your key findings. Are they fully developed and clearly articulated, or are there any minor weaknesses, such as a lack of depth or integration? Score each section, then total your points. If your score is in the 20s (Good+), you are doing well, but see if you can identify specific areas for improvement. To strengthen those areas, follow up with further reading and study (the references in this article are a great place to start).

Next, take this analysis a step further by using the rubric to evaluate published articles in a journal you are targeting for publication. For example, if you are aiming to publish a Featured Article in *The Language Teacher*, examine past articles in the TLT

archives (https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/archive). How do those discussion sections compare? What insights can you apply to your own writing? Deeply reading articles from your target journal is one of the best ways to internalize its style and tone.

Final Thoughts

In this column, I have provided a brief overview of what it takes to write a strong discussion section—first by highlighting common pitfalls, then by introducing a structured framework to help ensure you are covering all key elements. As you actively reflect on your writing and analyze published discussions, your experience and confidence will grow, allowing you to craft more complex and sophisticated analysis.

As a former journal editor, I can say with confidence that your chances of getting published increase significantly when your submission aligns with the journal's expectations. A big part of meeting that expectation is learning to interpret and communicate your findings effectively. Taking the time to analyze discussion sections you have written and from your target journal will help you present your research as a natural fit—a key factor in successful academic publishing.

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Table 1

Six-Point Structural Framework for a Strong Discussion Section (Dunton, 2021)

	Structural Element	Description
1	Key findings	Summarize the key findings and explicitly link them to the research question(s).
2	Context	Situate the findings within existing research by connecting them to the literature review. How do they align with or differ from previous studies?
3	Unexpected results	Identify and interpret any surprising or unexpected findings, explaining possible reasons for their occurrence.
4	Research limitations	Acknowledge study limitations and weaknesses, clearly explaining their impact on the research.
5	Future study ideas	Suggest areas for further research, highlighting gaps or open questions that warrant deeper investigation.
6	Conclusion	Restate the most significant findings and their broader contributions to the field.

Table 2

Self-Assessment Rubric for Discussion Section Evaluation

Points	Level	This structural element is…
4	Excellent	fully developed, clearly articulated, and effectively integrated. It strengthens the overall coherence and impact of the discussion.
3	Good	present and generally clear but could be refined for stronger impact. Contains some minor weaknesses in depth or integration.
2	Needs improvement	partially developed and lacks depth or clarity. It may feel disconnected or underexplored.
1	Weak	missing or significantly underdeveloped. It lacks clarity, relevance, or proper integration into the overall discussion.

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[JALT PRAXIS] JALT FOCUS

Michael Phillips

JALT currently has 30 chapters and 31 special interest groups (SIGs) spread out across Japan. Many of these groups are very active, holding regular events large and small. Further, collaboration, in all its forms, is a cornerstone of JALT's presence in the language teaching community. In addition to these "visible" groups, there are many other officers and committees that keep the organisation running smoothly from behind the scenes. This column publishes an in-depth review of one JALT group each issue, providing readers with a more complete picture of what the different groups are undertaking and achieving.

Past columns are available at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/jalt-focus
Email: jaltpubs.tlt.jalt.focus@jalt.org.

Introducing JALT's Newest Chapter

Joel Neff

President, Tochigi Chapter

JALT Tochigi is the newest chapter to join the wider JALT family. We were established as a voting member during the February 2025 Executive Board Meeting in Tokyo, and we are now looking forward to engaging with other chapters and SIGs as a collaborative partner and team-member.

Scope

Tochigi Prefecture sits on the northern edge of the Kanto plain and encompasses everything from the bustle of cities like Utsunomiya and Oyama to the quiet retreats of Nikko and Kinugawa with innovative technical corridors featuring companies like Honda and Toshiba in between. More importantly, Tochigi Prefecture serves as a gateway between the Kanto and Tohoku regions; as the largest prefecture in Kanto (but still smaller than all the Tohoku prefectures), Tochigi provides an ideal place for the central and northern areas to meet and collaborate on big ideas and bigger events.

Yet, for all that, until our chapter was formed, the region was sadly lacking in direct representation in JALT, with many members living in the prefecture joining geographically distant chapters to participate in JALT. With all that in mind, our core group of six officers petitioned to create a new chapter

dedicated to being a hub for all to work together through presentations, publications, and general fellowship.

Officers

- Joel Neff (President): As the founding president, I hope to lead the chapter the same way I lead my classes: with empathy, deep understanding of teaching and researching methodologies, and more than a few silly dad jokes. I hold a Master of the Arts from Leicester University, and my research is currently focused on ethics, student needs, and assorted grammatical odds and ends.
- Josh Kidd (Program Chair) has done a little of everything in his years in Japan. Now, he helps direct the English Program at Utsunomiya University by making sure all the students end up in the right classroom. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy from Macquarie University and is currently researching a dozen different topics.
- Rory Banwell (Membership Chair) tried hard to earn a Master of the Arts in All-Black studies but had to settle for a degree in sociology instead. He currently directs the English Program at Utsunomiya University and spends his research time on multimodality, student needs, and the intersection thereof.
- Emily Choong (Treasurer) is a familiar face around JALT. She has worked hard to plan and coordinate events for the organization, including last year's 50th international conference. She is currently the Conference Manager for JALT2025. When not wearing one of her many JALT hats, Emily is working on completing her master's degree with a specialty in speaking anxiety.
- Matthew Quinn (Publicity Chair) spent the pandemic earning his master's degree from Leicester University, where he researched TOEFL and linguistics while simultaneously running a business and teaching full-time. Now he is taking that same energy and drive and bringing it to our chapter, making sure people know about our chapter and the work we are doing. His current research focuses on language acquisition and pronunciation.
- Chris Smith (Publications Chair) puts enormous effort and dedication into producing our newsletter and his daytime job of creating and staffing Dokkyo University's Self-Access Learning Center. His current research focuses on the role of games in learning and student assessment.

Goals

During our inaugural year, we had our first large event, where we hosted author Diane Nagatomo and added several new members. We also released our first newsletter, which in turn, gave us the impetus for our first event of 2025. Thus, with an auspicious first year (and change) behind us, we have begun looking forward and clarifying what we, as a chapter, hope to achieve:

- We are looking for collaborators. We very much enjoyed hosting Diane and plan to have more speakers at more events. However, as all JALT is aware, creating engaging events with high participation can be a challenge. To facilitate our events table, we would like to request and encourage all chapters and SIGs to think of us as ready partners for collaborative events of all stripes.
- We are upping our publication game. During our first year, as mentioned, we were able to put out our first newsletter. That newsletter contained interactive content and links to our other media channels, making it a true multimodal publication. That said, we want to increase the amount and level of our content. We hope to give new(er) authors a platform and be a place for more established researchers to publish quality, peer-reviewed articles.
- We are providing opportunities for presenting. In addition to hosting established authors and researchers, we intend to use our platform to give under-published researchers a place to present their research and perfect their presentation skills. We'll be doing this through community and peer-driven events where members (and non-members) can share the work they are doing in a variety of styles.

With luck (and timing and support from the JALT community) we'll be able to achieve these goals and more in the years to come.

Join Us

As of now, our chapter stands at a whopping 21 members, but I hope that after reading this, any JALT members in and surrounding the Tochigi Prefecture area will join us and work with us to create an incredible hub for JALT here on the border of Kanto and Tohoku. Please feel free to contact us at tochigi@jalt.org.

JALT Notices

2025年総会開催通知

Notice of the 2025 JALT Ordinary General Meeting (OGM)

日時:2025年6月21日(土)

Date: June 21, 2025 (Saturday)

時間:13時 – 14時

Time: 1pm – 2pm

場所:〒910-0004 福井県福井市宝永3-1-1, 福井県国際交流会館(2階 第1・第2会議室)/ オンライン(ハイブリッドミーティング)

Location: 1st & 2nd Conference Room, 2F, Fukui International Activities Plaza (3-1-1, Hoei, Fukui-shi, Fukui 910-0004) (hybrid meeting)

議案 / Agenda:

- 第1号議案 2024年度事業報告 / Item 1. Business Report (2024/04/01-2025/03/31)
- 第2号議案 2024年度決算報告 / Item 2. Financial Report (2024/04/01-2025/03/31)
- 第3号議案 2024年度監査報告 / Item 3. Audit Report (2024/04/01-2025/03/31)
- 第4号議案 2025年度事業計画 / Item 4. Business Plan (2025/04/01-2026/03/31)
- 第5号議案 2025年度予算 / Item 5. Budget (2025/04/01-2026/03/31)
- 第6号議案 監査委員会の承認 / Item 6. Approval of Audit Committee

* 5月下旬に、会員の皆様に議案詳細、各報告書のリンク先、及び個別の不在者投票へのリンク先をEメールでご案内いたします。

* An email containing details of the agenda, including links to the various reports that will be presented, and a link to an individualized ballot will be sent to you at the end of May.

Eメールがお手元に届きましたら、不在投票の方法に従って投票をしてください。

本総会は、特定非営利活動法人(NPO)としての地位を保つ為に必要なもので、1/4 (25%) 以上の会員の皆様による出席(定足数)をもって、正式に開催することができます。

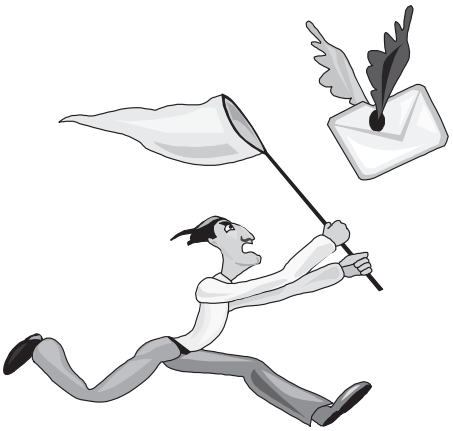
幸い当学会では、会員の皆様に向けて電子投票システムを提供させていただいており、不在投票をしていただくことで、本総会の出席者としてみなすことができます。

お手数をおかけいたしますが、ご支援とご協力のほどよろしくお願いします。

When you receive the email regarding the OGM, please follow the instructions on how to complete the absentee ballot. It is important for us to have a quarter (25%) of JALT members present at the OGM for it to be valid, and holding a valid OGM is necessary for us to maintain our status as a nonprofit organization (NPO). Fortunately, you can vote online by absentee ballot and be counted present for the meeting, as per the JALT Constitution.

Thank you very much for being a member of JALT and for your continued support.

Email address changed?



Don't forget to let us know...

<membership-office@jalt.org>

JALT's Mission

JALT promotes excellence in language learning, teaching, and research by providing opportunities for those involved in language education to meet, share, and collaborate.

使命(ミッション・ステートメント)全国語学教育学会は言語教育関係者が交流・共有・協働する機会を提供し、言語学習、教育、及び調査研究の発展に寄与します。

JALT MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)

- A professional organization formed in 1976
  - 1976年に設立された学術学会
- Working to improve language learning and teaching, particularly in a Japanese context
  -語学の学習と教育の向上を図ることを目的としています
- Almost 3,000 members in Japan and overseas
  - 国内外で約 3,000名の会員がいます

https://jalt.org

Annual International Conference

- 1,500 to 2,000 participants
  - 毎年1,500名から2,000名が参加します
- Hundreds of workshops and presentations
  - 多数のワークショップや発表があります
- Publishers' exhibition - 出版社による教材展があります
- Job Information Centre
  - 就職情報センターが設けられます

https://jalt.org/conference

JALT Publications

- *The Language Teacher*—our bimonthly publication
  - 隔月発行します
- *JALT Journal*—biannual research journal
  - 年2回発行します
- JALT Postconference Publication
  - 年次国際大会の研究発表記録集を発行します
- SIG and chapter newsletters, anthologies, and conference proceedings - 分野別研究部会や支部も会報、アンソロジー、研究会発表記録集を発行します

https://jalt-publications.org

JALT Community

Meetings and conferences sponsored by local chapters and special interest groups (SIGs) are held throughout Japan. Presentation and research areas include:

Bilingualism • CALL • College and university education • Cooperative learning • Gender awareness in language education • Global issues in language education • Japanese as a second language • Learner autonomy • Lifelong language learning • Materials development • Pragmatics, pronunciation, second language acquisition • Teaching children • Testing and evaluation

支部及び分野別研究部会による例会や研究会は日本各地で開催され、以下の分野での発表や研究報告が行われます。バイリンガリズム、CALL、大学外国語教育、共同学習、ジェンダーと語学学習、グローバル問題、日本語教育、自主的学習、語用論・発音・第二言語習得、児童語学教育、生涯語学教育、試験と評価、教材開発 等。

https://jalt.org/main/groups

JALT Partners

JALT cooperates with domestic and international partners, including (JALTは以下の国内外の学会と提携しています):

- AJET—The Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching
- IATEFL—International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
- JACET—The Japan Association of College English Teachers
- PAC—Pan-Asian Consortium of Language Teaching Societies
- TESOL—Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Membership Categories

All members receive annual subscriptions to *The Language Teacher* and *JALT Journal*, and member discounts for meetings and conferences. *The Language Teacher*や*JALT Journal* 等の出版物が1年間送付されます。また例会や大会に割引価格で参加できます。

- Regular 一般会員: ¥13,000
- Student rate (FULL-TIME students of undergraduate/graduate universities and colleges in Japan) 学生会員(国内の全日制の大学または大学院の学生): ¥7,000
- Joint—for two persons sharing a mailing address, one set of publications ジョイント会員 (同じ住所で登録する個人2名を対象とし、JALT出版物は2名に1部): ¥21,000
- Senior rate (people aged 65 and over) シニア会員(65歳以上の方): ¥7,000
- Group (5 or more) ¥8,500/person—one set of publications for each five members グループ会員(5名以上を対象とし、JALT出版物は5名ごとに1部): 1名 ¥8,500

https://jalt.org/main/membership

Information

For more information, please consult our website <https://jalt.org>, ask an officer at any JALT event, or contact JALT's main office.

JALT Central Office

Level 20, Marunouchi Trust Tower—Main,
1-8-3 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0005 JAPAN

JALT事務局：〒100-0005東京都千代田区丸の内1-8-3
丸の内トラストタワー本館20階

Tel: 03-5288-5443; jco@jalt.org

Joining JALT

Use the attached *furikae* form at post offices ONLY. When payment is made through a bank using the *furikae*, the JALT Central Office receives only a name and the cash amount that was transferred. The lack of information (mailing address, chapter designation, etc.) prevents the JCO from successfully processing your membership application. Members are strongly encouraged to use the secure online sign-up page located at:

https://jalt.org/joining

Scott Gardner *jaltpubs.tlt.old.gram@jalt.org*

Just Regular Fennel

One evening several years ago, my wife and I were enjoying a meal at a newly opened exotic restaurant. Although we were greatly impressed by the food and atmosphere, after a few minutes of eating, we nevertheless lapsed into our usual habit of playing a private elitist game we call "Name That Seasoning," where we both take on a pseudo-superior sense of taste and try to identify which particular herbs or spices have been used to flavor the food. Scoring is informal and unverified; the player who puts together the longest list of plausible flavoring candidates wins, whether actually correct or not. Since we first devised this game, I have racked up an astonishing record of approximately 0 – 52. For me, we might as well call the game "UFO: Unidentifiable Flavor Ornament." I was not even able to defeat her in a battle over that most American of foods, the French fry, when we once tried some boutique fries from a local food truck, and she incontestably added "a hint of cayenne pepper" to what I thought was a slam dunk with "table salt."

Anyway, the food at the restaurant that night was Asian, so without really knowing what I was talking about, I started the game with, "I think there might be some anise on this chicken." My wife shook her head and said, "I don't think so. That's just regular fennel."

This response of hers—"That's just regular fennel"—has been stuck in my head ever since, like a sesame seed in my teeth. What's so regular about fennel? Where I grew up, fennel-seasoned food was about as common as emu eggs for breakfast. My idea of seasoning was basically to add salt, and if you were feeling really crazy, Dijon mustard. The most outlandish spice I knew of was nutmeg, which Mom would pull out at Christmas to sprinkle on eggnog for the kids. (Needless to say, the eggnog was never seasoned with alcohol.) In college, I liked taking girls on dates to trendy chain restaurants where the server would bring salads and then pull out a giant baseball-bat-sized peppermill and ask, "How about some fresh-ground pepper? Say when!" I think if I asked him instead for a little rice vinegar and truffle oil, he would lower the bat dejectedly and drag it slowly back to the kitchen to have a talk with the manager.

A few years ago, while riding on a train somewhere outside Tokyo, I became enamored of the train line's public service posters for improving commuter behavior. They called the campaign "めいわくだもの" (*meiwakudamono*), a made-up portmanteau word that translates roughly as *troublemaking fruit*. The first poster I saw showed a "ながらあるキウィ" (*nagara aru kiwi*), a kiwi fruit that texts obliviously while it's walking. Some others: "荷物がおじゃマンゴ" (*nimotsu ga oja mango*), a mango carrying too much luggage; or "ドア前陣ドリアン" (*doa maejin dorian*), a durian that hogs the train's door space. These clever puns inspired me to spend a few weeks trying to come up with English versions that could be used on, say, the New York City subway system. "Fare Jumpersimmon" and "Wreak Havocado" are the only ones I remember now.

The train company's campaign was cute and funny, but I wondered, "Why fruit? What did fruit ever do to deserve being stereotyped and shamed in this way?" I think a much better food choice to represent bad commuter manners would be seasonings, because they are the final surface elements that affect overall food "communication"—for better or worse. There is a Japanese term, 塩対応 (*shiotaiou*), that literally means a "salty" response, or cold, crusty interaction. So the idea works, right?

Here are my first submissions for a public transit behavioral coercion campaign I call "むかちょうみりょう" (*mukachi* + *choumiryou* = worthless seasonings):

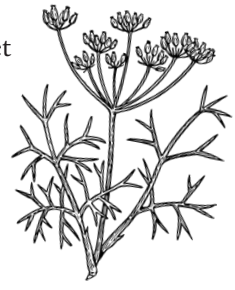
足をクミン (*ashi wo kumin*), cumin that takes up seat space with awkward leg placement.

うるセージ (*uru-seiji*), sage that talks loud with no regard for others.

間に合うダシ (*maniau dashi*), dashi that "dashes" for closing train doors.

And of course we can't forget the fennel:

電車でフェンネル (*densha de fenneru*), fennel that sleeps indiscriminately on the train.



AGENCY & AUTONOMY
In Language Learning

PanSIG 2025

PanSIG Plenary Speakers

Johnmarshall Reeve

Toshie Agawa

Invited Speakers

Eriko Yamabe, Gregory Paul Glasgow,
Andrew Tweed and Bryan Buschner, Mayumi Kashiwa

3-DAY CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Friday Night Workshops

- Interactive sessions
- Expert leaders
- 4 themes

SALC Showcases

- Learn secrets to success
- Japan and global
- 10 SALCs

Socials & Networking

- Local baseball game
- Gala dinner

Kanda University of International Studies — **May 16-18, 2025 - Chiba, Japan**

www.pansig.org | JALTpansig | @pansig2025 | @JALT_PanSIG | Visit Chiba — Endless Adventures Await

JALTCALL 2025
CALL for ALL
Tokyo, Japan

www.jaltcall.org

Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent AI boom, language teachers have all in effect now become CALL practitioners. The 2025 conference theme, CALL for ALL, recognizes this new reality in the educational profession.

JALTCALL strives to continue developing and expanding CALL as a discipline that benefits all language learners, and our annual conference aims to provide valuable opportunities for teachers, researchers, and other stakeholders in CALL to present their work, to exchange ideas, and to make meaningful new connections.

CONFERENCE DETAILS:

www.jaltcall2025.edzil.la/

JULY 18 - 20, 2025

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