

The Language Teacher

JALT *Journal*

The research journal of
the Japan Association
for Language Teaching

Volume 47 • No. 2 • November 2025



全国語学教育学会

Japan Association for Language Teaching

¥1,900 ISSN 0287-2420

JALT Journal

Volume 47 • No. 2

November 2025

Editor

Jeremie Bouchard
Hokkai-Gakuen University

Associate Editor

Joe Geluso
Nihon University

Assistant Editor

Paul Leeming
Kindai University

Incoming Assistant Editor

Robert Lowe
Ochanomizu University

Japanese-Language Editor

Masayuki Kudo
Fuji Women's University

Associate Japanese-Language Editor

Charles Mueller
Fuji Women's University

Incoming Japanese-Language Editor

Mayumi Kashiwa
Kanda University of International Studies

Reviews Editor

Melodie Cook
University of Niigata Prefecture

Production Editor

Cameron Flinn
Waseda University

Consulting Editor

Dennis Koyama
Sophia University

Editorial Board

William Acton
Trinity Western University
David Beglar
Temple University—Japan Campus

Charles Browne
Meiji Gakuin University
Yuko Goto Butler
University of Pennsylvania
Christine Pearson Casanave
Temple University—Japan Campus

Eton Churchill
Kanagawa University
Neil Cowie

Okayama University
James A. Elwood
Meiji University
Tom S. C. Farrell
Brock University
Nicola Galloway
University of Glasgow
Gregory Paul Glasgow
Kanda University of International Studies
Peter Gobel
Kyoto Sangyo University

Michael Guest
Miyazaki University
Eric Hauser
University of Electro-Communications and University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Yo In'nami
Chuo University
Gabriele Kasper
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Keita Kikuchi

Kanagawa University
Yuriko Kite
Kansai University
Brandon Kramer
Kwansei Gakuin University
Ryuko Kubota
University of British Columbia

Elizabeth Lavolette
Kyoto Sangyo University
Anne McLellan Howard
Miyazaki International College
Setsuko Mori
Kindai University
Tim Murphey
Kanda University of International Studies

Tomoko Nemoto
Temple University—Japan Campus
John M. Norris
ETS Japan
Christopher Nicklin
University of Tokyo
Greg Rouault
Hiroshima Shudo University

Hidetoshi Saito
Ibaraki University
Hideki Sakai
Shinshu University
Shoko Sasayama
Waseda University
David Shea
Keio University
Greg Sholdt
Konan University
Tamara Swenson
Osaka Jogakuin University
Ken Urano
Hokkai-Gakuen University
Yoshinori J. Watanabe
Sophia University

JALT Journal Proofreading: Nguyen Huu Chanh, Tân Trần Thanh, Tran Tan Phat, Mika Ella O. Perez

JALT Publications Board Chair: Theron Muller

JALT Journal Layout & Design: Malcolm Swanson

JALT Journal on the Internet: <https://jalt-publications.org/jj/> **Website Editor:** Sean Barber

- 131 In this Issue
- 133 From the Editor

Articles

- 137 Temporal Dynamics of EFL Learners' Oral Proficiency: Effects of Coursework and Self-Training Using Shadowing-Based Tasks—*Noriko Nakanishi*

Expositions

- 164 Class in English Language Teaching and Learning Research—*David Block*
- 182 Criticality and Creativity in L2 Pragmatics: Supporting Linguistic Justice Through Pragmatics Instruction—*Noriko Ishihara*
- 197 Non-cognitive Skills to Be Researched: Insights Gained From Educational Psychology—*Keita Kikuchi*

Reviews

- 214 *Dominant Language Constellations: A New Perspective on Multilingualism* (Edited by Joseph Lo Bianco and Larissa Aronin)—Reviewed by Harsha Dulari Wijesekera
- 219 *Plurilingual Education in a Monolingualised Nation: Exploring New Frontiers in Language Teaching in Japan* (Daniel Ray Pearce)
—Reviewed by Thomas Amundrud
- 225 *Promoting Reflection on Language Learning: Lessons from a University Setting* (Edited by Neil Curry, Phoebe Lyon and Jo Mynard)—Reviewed by Mizuka Tsukamoto
- 230 *The Twenty Most Effective Language Teaching Techniques* (I.S.P. Nation)
—Reviewed by J. Paul Marlowe
- 235 *Nicky Hockly's 30 Essentials for Using Artificial Intelligence* (Nicky Hockly)
—Reviewed by Rebecca L. M. Funabashi
- 240 *Mindsets in Language Education* (Adrian Leis, Åsta Haukås, Nigel Mantou Lou and Sachiko Nakamura)—Reviewed by Takeshi Onodera

JALT Journal Information

- 246 Information for Contributors (English and Japanese)
All materials in this publication are copyright ©2025 by JALT and their respective authors unless otherwise indicated. For more information on copyright in all JALT Publications: <https://jalt-publications.org/copyright>

Japan Association for Language Teaching

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 offers a means of keeping informed about developments in the rapidly changing field of second and foreign language education. Established in 1976, JALT serves an international membership of approximately 3,000 language teachers. JALT has 32 JALT chapters and 32 special interest groups (SIGs) and is a founder of PAC (Pan-Asian Consortium), which is an association of language teacher organizations in Pacific Asia. PAC holds annual regional conferences and exchanges information among its member organizations. JALT is the Japan affiliate of International TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) and a branch of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language). JALT is also affiliated with many other international and domestic organizations.

JALT publishes *JALT Journal*, a semiannual research journal; *The Language Teacher*, a bimonthly periodical containing articles, teaching activities, reviews, and announcements about professional concerns; and the annual *JALT Postconference Publication*.

The JALT International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning and Educational Materials Exposition attracts some 2,000 participants annually and offers more than 600 papers, workshops, colloquia, and poster sessions. Each JALT chapter holds local meetings, and JALT's SIGs provide information and newsletters on specific areas of interest. JALT also sponsors special events such as workshops and conferences on specific themes and awards annual grants for research projects related to language teaching and learning.

Membership is open to those interested in language education and includes copies of JALT publications, free or discounted admission to JALT-sponsored events, and optional membership in one chapter and one SIG. For an annual fee of ¥2,000 per SIG, JALT members can join as many additional SIGs as they desire. For information about JALT membership, contact the JALT Central Office or visit the JALT website.

JALT National Officers (2025)

President: *Clare Kaneko*
Vice President: *Kenn Gale*
Auditor: *Grant Osterman*
Director of Treasury: *Anton Potgieter*
Director of Records: *Frederick Bacala*
Director of Program: *Chelanna White*
Director of Conference: *Wayne Malcolm*
Director of Membership: *Julie Kimura*
Director of Public Relations: *William Pellowe*

Chapters

Akita, East Shikoku, Fukuoka, Gunma, Hiroshima, Hokkaido, Hokuriku, Ibaraki, Iwate-Aomori, Kitakyushu, Kobe, Kyoto, Matsuyama, Nagano, Nagoya & Gifu, Nankyu, Nara, Niigata, Oita, Okayama, Okinawa, Osaka, Sendai, Shizuoka, Tochigi, Tokyo, Tottori, Toyohashi, Yamagata, Yokohama

Special Interest Groups

Accessibility in Language Learning; Art, Research, and Teaching; Bilingualism; Business Communication; CEFR and Language Portfolio; College and University Educators; Computer Assisted Language Learning; Critical Thinking; Extensive Reading; Gender Awareness in Language Education; Global Englishes; Global Issues in Language Education; Intercultural Communication in Language Education; Learner Development; Lifelong Language Learning; Listening; Literature in Language Teaching; Materials Writers; Mind, Brain, and Education; Mixed, Augmented, and Virtual Realities; Other Language Educators; Performance in Education; Pragmatics; Study Abroad; Task-Based Learning; Teacher Development; Teachers Helping Teachers; Teaching Younger Learners; Testing and Evaluation; Vocabulary

JALT Central Office

Level 20, Marunouchi Trust Tower-Main,
1-8-3 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0005 Japan
Tel.: (+81) 3-5288-5443; Email: jco@jalt.org;
Website: <https://jalt.org>

In This Issue

Articles

This issue contains one full-length research article in English, and three *Expositions* articles in English. In the full-length research article, **Noriko Nakanishi** explores the relationship between in-class and out-of-class language learning, specifically the effects of coursework and self-training through shadowing-based tasks on language learners' oral proficiency development. While her findings suggest moderate progress resulting from self-training, the author also provides empirical support for two inter-related causal claims. Firstly, interactive, communication-focused classroom instruction encourages the development of pronunciation skills, oral fluency, and syntactic accuracy. However, these tend to stagnate or regress without sustained engagement by learners outside the classroom. This analysis leads to valuable insight on how to steer autonomous practice so as to sustain procedural oral skill development.

The first *Expositions* article, by renowned sociolinguist **David Block**, unpacks the concept of (social) class - as discussed within and beyond Marxist literature, and developed by the author - and relates it to many of the practical issues and questions explored by applied linguists and language teachers. It offers a series of powerful arguments on class as both a structuring reality and a process, and as a useful construct in research on English language teaching and learning. Block's argument about the need to frame English language education within a broader transformatory worldview offers rich conceptual grounds upon which to reconsider how English language teachers present the language and its social, political, and economic resonances, and ultimately, how they understand and respond to students' needs.

In the second *Expositions* paper, **Noriko Ishihara** argues that pragmatic competence should become an explicit area of language pedagogy, not as "icing on the cake" after learners have developed sufficient mastery of target language forms, but rather from the very first day of instruction for all learners. This underlying argument allows the author to draw clear conceptual links between language education and intercultural communication. She then proposes and unpacks a *learners-as-ethnographers* approach through which students can develop both (meta)pragmatic awareness and pragmatic language use in the classroom. The author also brings critical light upon the native-speaker criterion in language education, while fronting creativity and criticality as key

components of multilingual pragmatics. She also offers a critique of current translanguaging practices as potentially reinforcing linguistic racism and other forms of language-based injustices.

The third *Expositions* paper, by **Keita Kikuchi**, explores *non-cognitive* skills, with an explicit emphasis on grit, optimism, and resilience, three noteworthy concepts said to have particular relevance to foreign language education research in Japan. The author looks at non-cognitive skills also from the perspective of positive psychology, and offers valuable conceptual and practical possibilities for language teachers working in the Japanese EFL context.

Reviews

In this issue, we are pleased to present six excellent book reviews. The first is an analytical review of *Dominant Language Constellations: A New Perspective on Multilingualism*, by **Harsha Dulari Wijesekera**, who characterizes the volume as “a stimulating and timely addition to contemporary multilingualism studies ... offering a new conceptual vocabulary and an empirically grounded framework that better mirrors how individuals use and experience multiple languages in navigating today’s globalised contexts.” The second book, reviewed by **Thomas Amundrud**, is *Plurilingual Education in a Monolingualised Nation: Exploring New Frontiers in Language Teaching in Japan*. One of the features of this book is the author’s introduction of polyethnography, which according to Amundrud is an “intriguing innovation.” *Promoting Reflection on Language Learning: Lessons from a University Setting*, reviewed by **Mizuka Tsukamoto**, is our third offering. Characterizing the book as uniquely relevant because “all contributions stem from research and practice at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) in Japan”, Tsukamoto reveals the strengths of the work, at the same time offering suggestions for improvement. **Paul Marlowe**, who has reviewed books for *JALT Journal* in the past, has brought his analytical talents to a review of *The Twenty Most Effective Language Teaching Techniques*. Marlowe cheekily suggests that this volume could easily be re-titled *Paul Nation’s Greatest Hits*, and notes that “one of the book’s most notable strengths is its balance of empirical support and practical relevance.” Our fifth review, by **Rebecca L. M. Funabashi**, looks at a very timely *Nicky Hockly’s 30 Essentials for Using Artificial Intelligence*. While acknowledging that “[t]he pace of innovation in AI development creates obvious difficulties in writing a book about practical teaching applications of AI”, Funabashi praises

the author for being “forward-thinking ... by not focusing on particular tools, but on their main functionality.” Last but not least, we are pleased to present **Takeshi Onodera’s** review of *Mindsets in Language Education*. Acknowledging that the book focuses primarily on English rather than other languages, Onodera observes that “this volume makes a notable conceptual contribution and advancement by foregrounding the role of sociocultural and educational conditions in shaping mindsets, offering both context-specific insights and broader cross-contextual patterns.” We hope that *JALT Journal* readers will enjoy and benefit from reading the thoughtful reviews in this issue.

From the Editors

This issue is witness to many changes within *JALT Journal*. It marks the final issue with **Jeremie Bouchard** as editor. Jeremie will be missed, as the entire editorial team has become accustomed to learning from his critical eye, lightning speed work rate, and thoughtful feedback and guidance at all stages leading to the publication of a *JALT Journal* issue. His leadership and dedication to the journal have been nothing short of admirable. Thank you, Jeremie! Luckily for *JALT Journal* and the editors, he will take on the role of JALT Publications Board Chair, thus continuing to play a role in *JALT Journal*, albeit an indirect one. **Joe Geluso** will step into the role of editor, and **Paul Leeming** will become the associate editor. We are also happy to welcome **Rob Lowe** as the incoming assistant editor. Rob has extensive teaching and research experience in Japan and an impressive publication record. *JALT Journal* will most certainly benefit from his contributions. Joe and Paul look forward to working with Rob over the coming years. This issue also marks the last one for **Masayuki Kudo** and **Charles M. Mueller** as the two Japanese-language editors. Their combined efforts have helped sustain *JALT Journal’s* status as a bilingual academic journal, and expand the journal’s range of research interests. Thank you very much, Masayuki and Charles, for your generosity and valuable contributions, and we wish you the best in your future endeavours. We are also very pleased to welcome **Mayumi Kashiwa** as the new Japanese-language editor. Mayumi is a dynamic educator and scholar, with excellent publications to her name. We all look forward to working with her in the years to come.

— Jeremie Bouchard, Editor

— Joe Geluso, Associate Editor

— Paul Leeming, Assistant Editor

— Robert Lowe, Incoming Assistant Editor

Parting Messages

It has been an honour and a privilege for me to fulfill editorial duties at *JALT Journal*. Working alongside an exceptional team of expert editors, dedicated reviewers, and of course authors, I have learned a great deal about the range of research interests shared among members of the applied linguistics research community here in Japan. I extend my sincere gratitude to everyone I have had the privilege to meet while working as editor for the past four years or so, and thank them for their professionalism, collegiality, and commitment to high standards of scholarly publishing. I would also like to express my appreciation to the entire JALT organisation, with a special thanks to Theron Mueller for his broad understanding of the JALT organisation and his unwavering support of *JALT Journal*. I owe my deepest gratitude to the *JALT Journal* readership, whose engagement in the field, and expectations regarding quality research and academic discourse, continue to motivate the work done at *JALT Journal*. Joe Geluso now takes the lead as chief editor, and with Paul Leeming, Rob Lowe, Melodie Cook, Mayumi Kashiwa, and Cameron Flinn as teammates, *JALT Journal* could not be in better hands. Under their collective guidance, *JALT Journal* will continue to grow as a respected forum for critical inquiry and scholarly exchange. It is my honour to take on the role of JALT Publications Board Chair for the next few years. I look forward to new challenges and opportunities ahead.

—Jeremie Bouchard

Serving on the editorial team has been an enriching experience and a significant journey in my life. Throughout this remarkable engagement, I have gained valuable insight and skills that have greatly influenced my academic and professional development. I would like to express my gratitude for everyone's support, guidance, and encouragement. Thank you for the incredible opportunity to collaborate with such an exceptional team. I truly appreciate all your efforts and the opportunities you have provided me.

—Masayuki Kudo

It has been a pleasure supporting *JALT Journal* and working with such a dedicated community. Thank you for the opportunity and for your continued efforts to advance English language teaching.

—Charles M. Mueller

Introductory Messages

I am excited to join the *JALT Journal* as assistant editor. I look forward to working with this team to continue showcasing research that represents the exciting work being done both within and beyond the language teaching community in Japan.

—Robert Lowe

I am honored to serve as the *JALT Journal* Japanese-language editor. I am very much looking forward to working with the editorial team and assisting authors through the review and publication process. I hope to support the continued growth of Japanese-language scholarship and contribute to the journal's further development.

—Mayumi Kashiwa

The JALT Peer Support Group (PSG) aims to collaboratively assist writers in working through the writing process in order to develop their manuscripts to a (hopefully) publishable level. Our experienced Peer Readers will do their best to provide you with feedback and suggestions to improve content, clarity, and organization. However, they do not usually edit for grammar, punctuation, etc. as part of the process.

Submitting a Paper for Review

Please visit <https://jalt-publications.org/contact> to start the process. Once a paper is submitted, it may take a month or more for two rounds of feedback.

Becoming a PSG Peer Reader

PSG is always recruiting new Peer Readers! Benefits include: improving your writing skills, learning more about the academic publishing process, networking, and providing a valuable service to the academic community.

Please contact PSG at jaltpubs.peer.group@jalt.org to find out about becoming a Peer Reader.



JALT2025

全国語学教育学会

第51回年次国際大会教材展示会

2025年10月31日～2025年11月2日

国立オリンピック記念青少年総合センター

**51st Annual International Conference on
Language Teaching and Learning & Educational
Materials Exhibition**

October 31 – November 2, 2025

National Youth Olympic Center, Yoyogi, Tokyo, Japan

<https://jalt.org/conference/jalt2025>

Articles

Temporal Dynamics of EFL Learners' Oral Proficiency: Effects of Coursework and Self-Training Using Shadowing-Based Tasks

Noriko Nakanishi
Kobe Gakuin University

In EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environments, opportunities for learners to use the language outside the classroom are often limited, making it challenging to foster oral proficiency. This study examined the effects of spring semester coursework and summer self-training on the oral proficiency of 217 Japanese university students. It addressed 2 research questions: (1) changes in oral proficiency across the spring semester and subsequent summer vacation, and (2) the effects of intensive self-training during the vacation period. Semester instruction followed a flipped learning model, and summer training consisted of shadowing and related oral tasks. Oral proficiency was assessed using the Versant Speaking Test sub-scores. Results showed that mean scores improved during the spring semester but either plateaued or declined during the summer break. However, learners who actively engaged in summer self-training demonstrated small gains in fluency and pronunciation, suggesting the potential of autonomous practice to help sustain procedural oral skills.

英語が外国語として学ばれる環境(EFL)では、教室外での使用機会が限られるため、学習者の口頭能力の発達を促すことが難しい。本研究では、日本の大学生217名を対象に、(1) 春学期と夏季休暇を通じた口頭能力の変化、(2) 休暇中の集中的な自己トレーニングの効果を検討した。学期中はflipped learning型の授業を行い、夏休みにはシャドーイングおよび関連課題による自己練習を行った。Versant Speaking Testの4つのサブスコアを4月、7月、9月に測定した結果、春

<https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJJ47.2-1>

JALT Journal, Vol. 47, No. 2, November 2025

学期には全体的な向上が見られたが、休暇中は停滞または低下が生じた。一方、夏休み中の自己練習に積極的に取り組んだ学習者は、流暢さと発音において小さな向上を示した。これらの結果は、教室活動と自己練習の両立が口頭能力維持に有効であることを示唆している。

Keywords: self-training; semester transitions; shadowing; vacation impact; Versant Speaking Test

In language learning, the development of oral language proficiency, including fluency, pronunciation, and lexical knowledge, typically requires sustained exposure and repeated practice over time (Bygate, 2001; DeKeyser, 2007; Nation, 2007; Swain, 1985). According to Hakuta et al. (2000), ESL (English as a Second Language) learners in California and Canada needed three to five years to develop oral proficiency. If such extended timelines are required in ESL environments, it is evident that even more training time is necessary in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, where exposure to the target language is much more limited.

Given these challenges, the present study aims to examine changes in EFL learners' oral English proficiency over a six-month period by investigating the effects of interactive coursework during the spring semester and voluntary self-training during the summer vacation. The study focused on 217 Japanese university students, all of whom participated in classroom-based learning. During the semester, interactive classroom lessons were conducted based on a flipped learning approach (Lee & Wallace, 2018), in which students completed preparatory tasks such as listening comprehension, shadowing practice, and oral presentation rehearsals prior to class. For the self-training component, only students who opted in completed online assignments incorporating shadowing-based tasks (Minematsu et al., 2023). Learners' oral proficiency was assessed using the sub-scores of the Versant Speaking Test: Fluency, Pronunciation, Sentence Mastery, and Vocabulary (Pearson, 2022).

Literature Review

Limited Opportunities for Oral Communication in EFL Contexts

EFL learners typically encounter fewer opportunities for oral communication than their ESL counterparts. Lightbown and Spada (2013) emphasize that EFL learners receive only a few hundred hours of language instruction over several years, compared to the immersive environments found in ESL contexts. Furthermore, when both teachers and students share the same L1, as is often the case in Japan, classroom communication

frequently defaults to the native language, reducing learners' chances to engage in meaningful target language use (Eyring, 2014).

These environmental constraints have measurable consequences for learners' oral proficiency development. Zhang (2009) observed that limited access to authentic input and output in Chinese EFL settings hindered learners' development of spoken fluency. Similarly, Teeter (2017) found that Japanese university students experienced a decline in listening proficiency during their first year, due to structural limitations such as large class sizes, reading-focused instruction, and insufficient time devoted to speaking practice. These findings support the view that sustained and meaningful oral interaction is crucial for the development of fluency and accuracy (Bygate, 2001; Swain, 1985).

Muñoz (2014) further noted that it is not the age of exposure but rather the quantity and quality of interaction that predict oral performance. Her longitudinal research revealed that learners who experienced extended informal contact and time abroad achieved higher levels of fluency and syntactic complexity than those with classroom-only instruction. Such evidence supports Nation's (2007) assertion that fluency development requires a dedicated strand of practice-oriented input and output over time.

Structural limitations within academic calendars exacerbate this issue. For example, Japan's University Establishment Standards (MEXT, 1956, Chapter 6, Article 22) recommend a 35-week academic calendar per year, consequently leaving an approximately 17-week vacation period. Even if gains are made during the semester, students risk losing progress during long vacation periods without sustained input or practice opportunities. Cooper (2003) identified a similar phenomenon in the U.S.—“summer learning loss”—showing that extended breaks can lead to declines in academic and procedural skills, especially among learners from disadvantaged or non-English-speaking backgrounds. This concern is applicable to EFL learners as well: without structured input and practice during breaks, oral proficiency gains made during the semester may regress.

Effects of Self-Training

To mitigate learning loss during breaks, various studies have explored the effects of self-training on oral proficiency. Trofimovich et al. (2009) demonstrated that while long-term listening and reading comprehension support pronunciation development, production-based tasks, such as speaking, are essential for improving fluency and comprehensibility. Their

findings align with DeKeyser's (2007) claim that practice involving active output is necessary to automatize oral skills.

In a related study, Nagle et al. (2025) examined high-variability phonetic training (HVPT) and found that training frequency, rather than the number of talkers, had the greatest impact on perceptual learning outcomes. This reinforces the argument that both regularity and structure in self-training are key factors for success in EFL oral skill development.

Programs incorporating shadowing as a self-training technique have also shown promising results. Kuniyama et al. (2022) and Nakanishi et al. (2022) found that Japanese university students who actively participated in summer shadowing activities improved their oral fluency. Similarly, Foote and McDonough (2017) implemented mobile-assisted shadowing using iPods, resulting in noticeable gains in both fluency and comprehensibility, as well as positive learner attitudes.

The Role of Shadowing in Oral Proficiency Development

Shadowing has been defined as “a paced, auditory tracking task which involves the immediate vocalization of auditorily presented stimuli” (Lambert, 1992, p. 266) and is widely recognized as an effective method for enhancing oral proficiency. Hamada (2019a) reviewed both theoretical and empirical literature and emphasized that shadowing promotes deep cognitive processing by requiring focused attention on auditory input. This results in improvements in listening comprehension (Hamada, 2019b).

Kadota (2019) elaborated on four mechanisms by which shadowing facilitates language acquisition: input effects (enhanced listening), practice effects (improved phonological working memory), output effects (better fluency through speech simulation), and monitoring effects (metacognitive regulation of speech). These multifaceted effects position shadowing as a uniquely effective technique that bridges the gap between input and output, echoing Swain's (1985) comprehensible output hypothesis and Nation's (2007) emphasis on fluency-building activities.

By combining listening and speaking in an integrated task, shadowing supports both receptive and productive skills, making it particularly valuable in contexts where naturalistic exposure is limited. It also allows for flexibility in design, ranging from passive listening to active vocal production, offering educators a versatile tool to support oral proficiency development across various EFL contexts.

Research Questions

This study investigates how coursework during the spring semester and self-training during the summer vacation influence the oral proficiency of EFL learners. Two main research questions are addressed:

- RQ 1. How does oral proficiency change over the course of a semester and the following long vacation?
- RQ 2. Does intensive self-training during the vacation period affect oral proficiency?

The first research question focuses on the impact of in-class coursework and the summer training program. It is expected that while students' proficiency may improve during the semester, it might decline or stagnate during the long vacation period due to reduced opportunities for language use. Moreover, the study distinguishes between first- and second-year students in English conversation courses. Students in the first year, who take English conversation courses for the first time, experience a shift from traditional reading-heavy classes (Teeter, 2017) to more interactive speaking-focused lessons. This transition can impact their oral proficiency, as they are not only exposed to new learning methods but also to their first substantial exposure to real-time spoken English. Second-year students, who have had one year of experience in the English conversation course, may demonstrate different proficiency gains due to their previous exposure. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how these two groups (first- and second-year students) respond differently to the semester's coursework, considering the varying levels of previous experience and the interactive nature of the lessons.

The second question explores the role of voluntary self-training during the summer vacation. Previous research has shown that learners can improve their oral proficiency through self-directed training (Foote & McDonough, 2017; Kuniyara et al., 2022; Nakanishi et al., 2022). It is hypothesized that higher participation in the self-training tasks, such as shadowing and other related activities, will lead to greater improvements in participants' oral proficiency. The study explored whether consistent and intensive engagement with self-training can effectively enhance learners' ability to produce fluent, accurate, and contextually appropriate spoken English.

This study examines the changes in learners' oral proficiency using four sub-scores of the Versant Speaking Test: Fluency, Pronunciation, Sentence Mastery, and Vocabulary, taken in April, July, and September.

Method

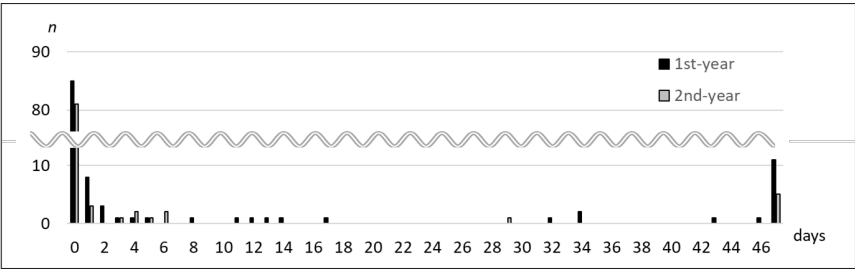
Participants

The participants were students enrolled in mandatory English conversation courses at a Japanese university during the spring semester of the 2023 academic year. These courses followed separate syllabi for first- and second-year students. Classes were randomly assigned and consisted of 20 to 25 students, meeting twice a week for 15 weeks. At the start of the semester, students' oral English proficiency ranged from CEFR A1 to A2, as measured by the Versant English Speaking Test (Pearson, 2022). Due to the university's requirement for third-year students to study abroad, most participants were relatively motivated to improve their English proficiency.

The first part of this study examined changes in oral English proficiency over the course of the semester among first-year ($n = 121$) and second-year ($n = 96$) students. All students took the Versant English Speaking Test in April (beginning of the semester), July (end of the semester/beginning of summer vacation), and September (end of summer vacation).

During the final week of the spring semester, students were invited to participate in an optional self-training program over the summer vacation. Participation was voluntary and unrelated to students' grades in either the spring or upcoming fall semester. Figure 1 illustrates the number of students (vertical axis) by the number of days they engaged in self-training out of the total 47-day period (horizontal axis). There were 166 students who had 0 days of participation, meaning they did not engage in self-training even once. A total of 51 students completed at least one training session. Among these, the data showed a clear divide between lower participation (1–17 days, $n = 29$) and higher participation (29–47 days, $n = 22$). In the second part of this study, changes in oral proficiency were analyzed across these three groups: "Never" ($n = 166$), "Lower" ($n = 29$), and "Higher" ($n = 22$) participation groups.

Figure 1
Number of First- and Second-Year Students by Total Days of Participation



Procedures

In-Class and Homework Activities During the Spring Semester

The English conversation courses followed a flipped learning model (Lee & Wallace, 2018). Drawing on the instructional cycle proposed by Nakanishi et al. (2019), students completed preparatory homework assignments, such as listening comprehension, shadowing-related tasks, oral presentation script writing, and recorded presentation rehearsals, prior to attending class. These tasks were designed to support active use of English during in-class activities. Classroom sessions focused on oral output, exposure to authentic input, and opportunities for self-monitoring and peer interaction. After in-class activities, students uploaded their presentation videos to YouTube, provided peer feedback to their classmates' videos, and reflected on their own work. One instructional cycle spanned approximately two to three weeks. All classroom instruction and discussions were conducted in English, while homework instructions, which were intended for independent study, were provided in Japanese to ensure clarity and minimize confusion.

These assignments and activities aligned closely with the classroom discussion topics. Table 1 presents the discussion topics covered in the spring semester. First-year students worked with a textbook that focused on familiar, everyday topics related to college life (Nakanishi et al., 2023a), and were encouraged to use simple English expressions to become comfortable with oral communication. For most students, this was their first experience in an interactive, communication-focused English class, as many Japanese secondary school classes tend to emphasize reading and grammar in large-group settings (Teeter, 2017). Second-year students used a textbook centered on social issues (Nakanishi et al., 2023b). These

students had completed the English conversation course during the previous year and were expected to develop and express their opinions more logically. Both first- and second-year classes met twice weekly. Each unit topic was practiced over two to three weeks, with Friday classes emphasizing interactive discussion and Thursday classes focusing on presentation skills (e.g., pair work, group work, rehearsals).

Table 1
Discussion Topics for the Spring Semester

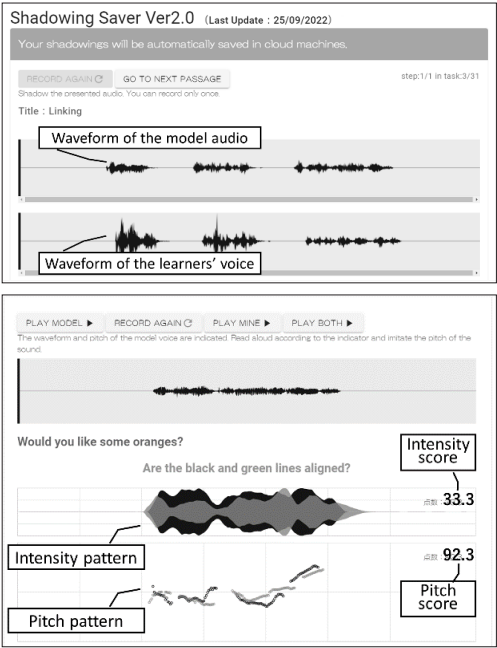
Unit	1st year	2nd year
1	College life	Academic research
2	Understanding copyright	Social issues in Japan
3	Cyberbullying	Personal safety
4	Tourism	Gender
5	Foreign encounters	Religion
6	Entertainment	Business

Note. Excerpted from Nakanishi et al. (2023a, 2023b).

Intensive Self-Training During the Summer Vacation

During the 47-day summer vacation, an online self-training program was offered, with shadowing-based tasks as a central component following the procedure introduced in Minematsu et al. (2023). Figure 2 shows how shadowing and overlapping tasks were presented on the training platform. In the shadowing task, learners repeated what they heard through their headphones, and the waveform of their utterances was displayed beneath the waveform of the model audio. In the overlapping task, learners spoke in unison with the model voice while monitoring the intensity and pitch patterns displayed on the screen. Learners could repeat overlapping tasks to improve their score, which was based on the degree of match in pitch and intensity patterns.

Figure 2
Interface of Shadowing and Overlapping Tasks on the Training Platform



Note. The top screen shows the shadowing task, where students repeat aloud what they hear through headphones. The top waveform displays the model voice, and the bottom waveform shows the learner's shadowed voice. The bottom screen shows the overlapping task, where learners speak simultaneously with the model audio. The interface provides real-time feedback on pitch and intensity alignment, displayed as correlation scores. Learners may repeat the task to improve their performance.

As summarized in Table 2, the training program was divided into three phases: Phase I (first 10 days) focused on connected speech, Phase II (30 days) on daily expressions, and Phase III (last 7 days) on prosodic features. All audio materials and transcripts were sourced from Nakanishi (2023). Participants were instructed to record their voice for each task and submit daily activity reports via a dedicated website. They were expected to spend at least 30 minutes on the seven daily tasks. Upon submission of their reports, participants provided consent for their recordings to be used for educational and research purposes under conditions of anonymity.

Table 2
Tasks Assigned for Intensive Self-Training During Summer Vacation 2023

Phase	Focus
I. Aug. 4– Aug. 13	Three sentences per day, focusing on features of connected speech (e.g., linking, elision, assimilation, and reduction).
II. Aug. 14– Sept. 12	Five sentences per day, focusing on expressions frequently used in daily communication.
III. Sept. 13– Sept. 19	One-minute excerpts from celebrity speeches, focusing on rhythm, intonation, speech rate, and emotion.
Task	Description
1) Shadowing (twice, normal speed)	Without script display, learners listen to the model audio and simultaneously repeat it aloud. The same utterance is shadowed and recorded twice. (Figure 2, top)
2) T/F Questions	Learners read sentences displayed on the screen and determine whether they match the content of the audio in Task 1 to check comprehension.
3) Synchro-Reading (normal speed)	With the script visible, learners read aloud in sync with the model audio, guided by a waveform indicator. Listening accuracy is calculated by comparing recordings from Tasks 1 and 3.
4) Synchro-Reading (slow audio)	Same as Task 3, but using slowed-down audio (0.5x and 0.8x speeds). Learners focus more closely on sound changes in connected speech.
5) Synchro-Reading (normal speed)	Repeating Task 3 at normal speed. Learners may re-record as many times as desired to improve pronunciation.
6) Overlapping (normal speed)	The script and real-time visual feedback (intensity and pitch patterns) are provided. Learners speak in unison with the model voice, aiming to exceed 60% in both pitch and intensity correlation scores. (Figure 2, bottom)
7) Reading Aloud	Without audio support, learners read the script aloud while following a visual pacing indicator. This task allows learners to check the final quality of their pronunciation and rhythm.

Versant English Speaking Test

The Versant English Speaking Test evaluates learners' spoken English proficiency using five task types: Reading, Repeating, Short Answer Questions, Sentence Building, and Story Retelling (Pearson, 2022). It provides an Overall score and four diagnostic sub-scores:

Fluency: Assesses rhythm, phrasing, and timing in sentence construction, reading, and repetition.

Pronunciation: Measures native-like production of consonants, vowels, and stress within sentence contexts.

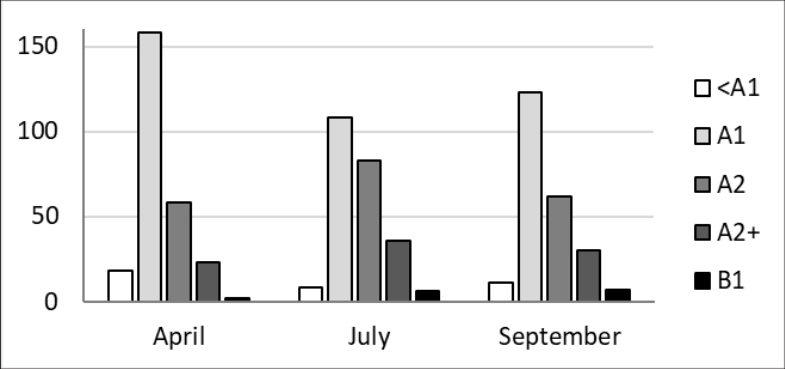
Sentence Mastery: Reflects the ability to produce syntactically accurate and meaningful sentences using appropriate word and clause structures.

Vocabulary: Indicates familiarity with the form, meaning, and contextual use of everyday words in connected speech.

Overall and sub-scores range from 10 to 90 on Pearson's Global Scale of English (GSE), which is aligned with the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). The test's reliability and construct validity are supported by prior research (De Jong et al., 2016; Mayor et al., 2016). Downey et al. (2008) applied Bachman and Palmer's (1996) framework to evaluate test usefulness and found the Versant Test to have high authenticity and validity. Isbell and Kremmel (2020) reported moderate to high correlations between Versant scores and other standardized tests, such as IELTS and TOEFL iBT. Okamura (2013) found that Pronunciation and Vocabulary scores in particular affected intelligibility in Japanese learners' speech.

Students took the test three times: in April (start of semester), July (end of semester/start of vacation), and September (end of vacation). The April–July change was used to examine the effects of classroom learning, while the July–September change reflected developments during the summer vacation. Students who repeated the same first- or second-year course from the previous year were excluded. Only students who completed all three test sessions were included in the analysis. Figure 3 presents the distribution of students by CEFR levels at each testing period.

Figure 3
Student Proficiency Levels by CEFR Categories at Each Testing Period



Note. The correspondence between the CEFR level and the Versant Overall GSE score is <A1 = 21 or below, A1 = 22–29, A2 = 30–35, A2+ = 36–42, and B1 = 43–50.

Results

Changes in EFL Learners’ Oral Proficiency Over Six Months

To address RQ1, changes in learners’ oral proficiency were examined over a six-month period in 2023. Versant Speaking Test scores were collected at three points: the beginning of the spring semester (April), the end of the semester (July), and the end of the summer vacation (September). First-year ($n = 121$) and second-year ($n = 96$) students were analyzed separately due to differences in their syllabi. Two-way ANOVAs were conducted on each Versant sub-score, with Year Group (1st, 2nd) as a between-subjects factor and Month (Apr, Jul, Sep) as a within-subjects factor, using Langtest (Mizumoto, 2015).

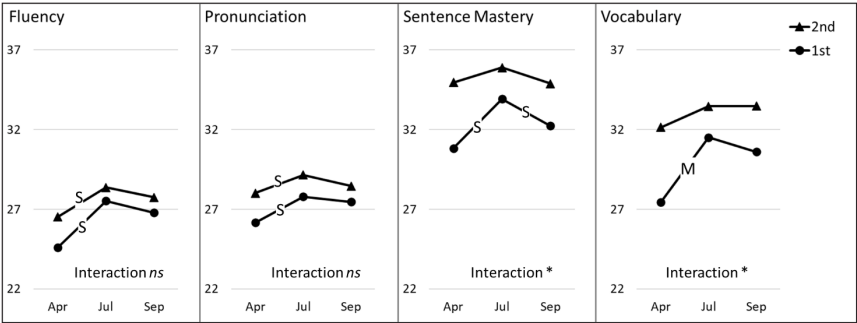
Figure 4 illustrates sub-score changes by Month and Year Group. Most mean scores were within the CEFR A1 (GSE 22–29) to A2 (GSE 30–35) range. Two-way ANOVAs revealed no statistically significant interaction between Month and Year Group for Fluency [$F(2, 430) = 1.43, p = .241, \eta^2p = .007$] or Pronunciation [$F(2, 430) = 1.05, p = .351, \eta^2p = .005$]. However, interactions for Sentence Mastery [$F(2, 430) = 4.41, p = .013^*, \eta^2p = .020$] and Vocabulary [$F(2, 430) = 4.22, p = .015^*, \eta^2p = .019$] were significant, prompting further analyses by Month and Year Group.

Regarding group differences, the main effect of Year Group was not significant for Fluency [$F(1, 215) = 1.83, p = .178, \eta^2p = .008$], and marginal for Pronunciation [$F(1, 215) = 3.69, p = .056^+, \eta^2p = .017$]. Sentence Mastery scores were significantly higher for second-year students in both

April [$F(1, 215) = 24.52, p < .001^{***}, \eta^2p = .102$] and September [$F(1, 215) = 7.38, p = .007^{**}, \eta^2p = .033$]. Similarly, their Vocabulary scores were significantly higher in April [$F(1, 215) = 29.53, p < .001^{***}, \eta^2p = .121$] and September [$F(1, 215) = 6.87, p = .009^{**}, \eta^2p = .031$], indicating that second-year students outperformed first-year students in these sub-scores.

Main effects of Month and simple main effects of Month by Year Group were further examined. Holm’s sequentially rejective Bonferroni procedure was applied for multiple comparisons, and effect sizes (Cohen’s d) were computed (see Table 3).

Figure 4
Versant Speaking Test Mean Scores by Month and Year Group



Note. Data were collected in April (Apr), July (Jul), and September (Sep). Triangles represent second-year students ($n = 96$), and circles represent first-year students ($n = 121$). S = small ($d > .20$); M = medium ($d > .50$).

Table 3
Effects of Month by Year Group (Cohen’s d).

	Fluency		Pronunciation		Sentence Mastery		Vocabulary	
Year	Apr –Jul	Jul –Sep	Apr –Jul	Jul –Sep	Apr –Jul	Jul –Sep	Apr –Jul	Jul –Sep
First	.39 ↗	.09	.28 ↗	.05	.49 ↗	.24 ↘	.58 ↗	.12
Second	.26 ↗	.08	.20 ↗	.11	.15	.15	.19	.00

Note. Apr = April; Jul = July; Sep = September.

The symbol “↗” indicates a positive effect size, while “↘” indicates a negative effect size during the given period. Note that arrows refer to effect size direction, not necessarily statistical significance.

Fluency

Fluency scores improved during the semester and slightly declined during the summer vacation. A significant main effect of Month was found for Fluency [$F(2, 430) = 24.72, p < .001^{***}, \eta^2p = .103$]. Scores improved from April ($M = 25.6, SD = 6.84$) to July ($M = 27.9, SD = 7.91$) [adj. $p < .001^{***}$], with small effect sizes both for first-year ($d = .39$) and second-year ($d = .26$) students. From July to September, scores slightly declined ($M = 27.3, SD = 7.36$) [adj. $p = .049^*$], though the associated effect sizes were minimal ($d = .09$ for first-years, $d = .08$ for second-years). These results suggest that fluency gains were primarily achieved during the semester, but did not continue through the summer break.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation scores increased during the semester and then remained stable. A significant main effect of Month was found for Pronunciation [$F(2, 430) = 11.17, p < .001^{***}, \eta^2p = .049$]. Scores improved from April ($M = 27.1, SD = 5.60$) to July ($M = 28.5, SD = 6.26$) [adj. $p < .001^{***}$], with small effect sizes ($d = .28$ for first-years; $d = .20$ for second-years). A marginal decline was observed in September ($M = 28.0, SD = 5.94$) [adj. $p = .074^+$] with minimal effect sizes ($d = .05$ and $.11$, respectively). Overall, pronunciation showed modest gains during coursework and remained relatively stable during the break, with effect sizes mostly falling below the threshold for small effects.

Sentence Mastery

The development of sentence mastery was evident primarily in first-year students. Simple main effects of Month were significant for first-year students [$F(2, 240) = 17.10, p < .001^{***}, \eta^2p = .125$] and marginal for second-years [$F(1.91, 181) = 2.46, p = .091^+, \eta^2p = .025$]. First-year scores increased significantly from April ($M = 30.8, SD = 6.22$) to July ($M = 33.9, SD = 6.44$) [adj. $p < .001^{***}, d = .49$, small effect], then declined in September ($M = 32.2, SD = 7.44$) [adj. $p = .002^{**}, d = .24$, small negative effect]. On the other hand, second-year students showed no significant change with negligible effect sizes: April ($M = 35.0, SD = 5.96$), July ($M = 35.9, SD = 6.22$) [adj. $p = .120, d = .15$], and September ($M = 34.9, SD = 6.76$) [adj. $p = .135, d = .15$]. These findings suggest that grammatical development was observed in first-years during coursework but partially regressed over the break, while second-years showed a plateau pattern.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary improvement during the semester was notable among first-year students. A significant main effect of Month was found for Vocabulary in the first-year group [$F(2, 240) = 24.51, p < .001^{***}, \eta^2p = .170$], but not for second-years [$F(2, 190) = 2.02, p = .136, \eta^2p = .021$]. First-year scores increased significantly with a medium effect size from April ($M = 27.5, SD = 6.29$) to July ($M = 31.5, SD = 7.38$) [adj. $p < .001^{***}, d = .58$], then remained statistically unchanged in September ($M = 30.6, SD = 7.96$) [adj. $p = .108, d = .12$]. Second-year scores remained consistent across all time points: April ($M = 32.1, SD = 6.35$), July ($M = 33.5, SD = 8.41$), and September ($M = 33.5, SD = 8.06$). This pattern suggests that vocabulary gains occurred primarily among first-year students during the semester and were retained during the break, while second-year students' performance remained stable.

Effects of Intensive Self-Training During Summer Vacation

To address RQ2, the effects of intensive self-training during summer vacation on learners' oral proficiency were analyzed. Students were grouped according to their training participation rate, regardless of year group, as the same self-training tasks were assigned across both cohorts. Participants who engaged in self-training for 29 days or more ($n = 22$) were classified as the "Higher" group, those who participated for 17 days or fewer ($n = 29$) as the "Lower" group, and those who did not engage in training at all ($n = 166$) as the "Never" group. Given the unequal group sizes and unbalanced variances, non-parametric tests were employed to evaluate changes in Versant sub-scores over time and across groups.

To determine whether students with higher initial proficiency were more likely to participate in summer self-training, group differences in each test month were examined using Kruskal-Wallis tests. As shown in Table 4, no significant differences were observed among the three groups in April and July, suggesting similar proficiency levels at the beginning and end of the spring semester. However, by September, significant differences emerged in Fluency, Pronunciation, and Sentence Mastery sub-scores. Subsequent post hoc pairwise comparisons using the Mann-Whitney U test with Holm-Bonferroni correction indicated that in September, the Higher group outperformed the Lower and Never groups in Fluency, Pronunciation, and Sentence Mastery, with small to medium effect sizes. Comparing the Lower and Never groups in September, significant differences were observed only in Pronunciation.

Table 4
Kruskal-Wallis Tests on Group Differences in Versant Sub-scores by Month (df = 2)

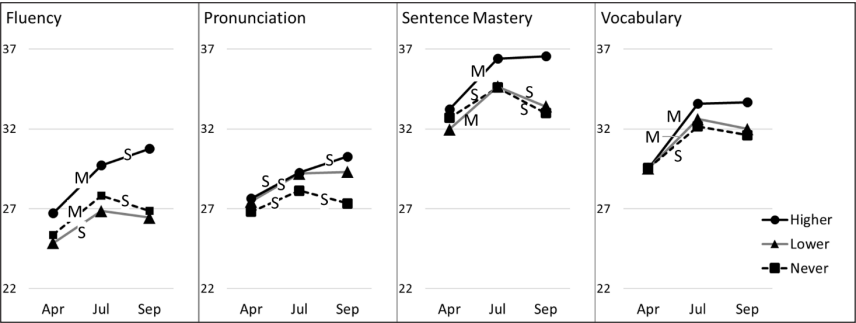
	Fluency			Pronunciation			Sentence Mastery			Vocabulary		
	Apr	Jul	Sep	Apr	Jul	Sep	Apr	Jul	Sep	Apr	Jul	Sep
χ^2	1.54	2.26	6.85	2.34	1.11	11.72	0.64	1.27	5.19	0.10	1.38	0.97
p	.463	.323	.033*	.310	.573	.003**	.725	.530	.075+	.953	.501	.617
r	.050	.067	.145	.069	.038	.202	.024	.043	.121	.004	.046	.034

Note. Apr = April; Jul = July; Sep = September.

+ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Figure 5 illustrates the trends in mean Versant Speaking Test scores by Month (Apr, Jul, Sep) and Participant Group (Higher, Lower, Never). Friedman rank sum tests were conducted to examine longitudinal changes in scores within each group. Statistically significant differences were found in all three groups across months. For post hoc comparisons, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests with Holm-Bonferroni correction were performed between months (April–July, July–September) and effect size r was calculated, as presented in Table 5.

Figure 5
Versant Speaking Test Mean Scores by Month and Participant Group



Note. Scores were measured in April (Apr), July (Jul), and September (Sep). The solid line with circles represents the Higher group ($n = 22$), the gray line with triangles the Lower group ($n = 29$), and the dotted line with squares the Never group ($n = 166$).
S = small ($r > .10$); M = medium ($r > .30$).

Table 5

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Tests for Within-Group Changes Over Time (Effect Size r)

Year	Fluency		Pronunciation		Sentence Mastery		Vocabulary	
	Apr -Jul	Jul -Sep	Apr -Jul	Jul -Sep	Apr -Jul	Jul -Sep	Apr -Jul	Jul -Sep
Higher	.435 ↗	.175 ↗	.274 ↗	.284 ↗	.465 ↗	.068	.359 ↗	.037
Lower	.287 ↗	.096	.283 ↗	.017	.303 ↗	.162 ↘	.394 ↗	.065
Never	.302 ↗	.114 ↘	.211 ↗	.148 ↘	.245 ↗	.226 ↘	.225 ↗	.050

Note. Apr = April; Jul = July; Sep = September.

The symbol “↗” indicates a positive effect size, while “↘” indicates a negative effect size during the given period. Note that arrows refer to effect size direction, not necessarily statistical significance.

Fluency

Fluency scores improved during the spring semester across all groups, but diverged during the summer depending on the level of self-training. The Higher group showed an increase from April ($M = 26.7$, $SD = 5.95$) to July ($M = 29.7$, $SD = 7.62$), with a continued rise in September ($M = 30.8$, $SD = 7.03$). The April–July improvement was statistically significant ($z = 2.884$, $\text{adj.}p = .008^*$, $r = .435$), indicating a medium effect, while the July–September gain was not significant ($z = 1.163$, $\text{adj.}p = .245$, $r = .175$), but reflecting a small effect. The Lower group also improved from April ($M = 24.9$, $SD = 6.67$) to July ($M = 26.9$, $SD = 7.47$), followed by a slight drop in September ($M = 26.5$, $SD = 6.76$). The semester gain was marginally significant ($z = 2.185$, $\text{adj.}p = .087^+$, $r = .287$), suggesting a small effect, while the summer decline was negligible ($z = 0.730$, $\text{adj.}p = .465$, $r = .096$). The Never group improved from April ($M = 25.4$, $SD = 6.99$) to July ($M = 27.8$, $SD = 8.03$), but scores decreased in September ($M = 26.9$, $SD = 7.41$). The April–July gain was statistically significant ($z = 5.502$, $\text{adj.}p < .001^{***}$, $r = .302$), indicating a medium effect, and the summer drop was also significant ($z = 2.081$, $\text{adj.}p = .037^+$, $r = .114$), representing a small negative effect. Overall, fluency gains were best sustained by the Higher group, who engaged in frequent self-training.

Pronunciation

All groups showed gains in pronunciation during the semester, but their trajectories varied over the summer. The Higher group moved from April ($M = 27.6$, $SD = 5.21$) to July ($M = 29.3$, $SD = 6.67$), and then to September ($M = 30.3$, $SD = 4.34$). The gains in mean scores were not statistically significant either during the semester ($z = 1.817$, $\text{adj.}p = .119$, $r = .274$) or over the summer ($z = 1.885$, $\text{adj.}p = .119$, $r = .284$), but small effect sizes were indicated for both periods. The Lower group improved from April ($M = 27.5$, $SD = 5.69$) to July ($M = 29.2$, $SD = 6.18$), and held steady in September ($M = 29.3$, $SD = 6.07$). The semester gain was marginally significant ($z = 2.155$, $\text{adj.}p = .092^+$, $r = .283$, small effect), and no significant change was observed in the summer ($z = 0.133$, $\text{adj.}p = .894$, $r = .017$). The Never group improved from April ($M = 26.8$, $SD = 5.66$) to July ($M = 28.1$, $SD = 6.24$), but declined by September ($M = 27.3$, $SD = 6.01$). The spring semester gain was significant ($z = 3.847$, $\text{adj.}p < .001^{***}$, $r = .211$, small effect), and the summer drop was also significant ($z = 2.702$, $\text{adj.}p = .014^+$, $r = .148$, small negative effect). The results show that the Higher group was more successful than the other groups in terms of pronunciation scores throughout the semester and summer vacation.

Sentence Mastery

Sentence mastery improved during the semester for all groups, but only the Higher group maintained their mean score through the summer. The Higher group progressed from April ($M = 33.2$, $SD = 5.80$) to July ($M = 36.4$, $SD = 5.66$), with performance remaining stable in September ($M = 36.6$, $SD = 5.90$). The April–July improvement was significant ($z = 3.084$, $\text{adj.}p = .006^{**}$, $r = .465$), showing a medium effect, and the July–September change was negligible ($z = 0.449$, $\text{adj.}p = .653$, $r = .068$). The Lower group increased from April ($M = 32.0$, $SD = 6.13$) to July ($M = 34.7$, $SD = 5.78$), but then declined to September ($M = 33.4$, $SD = 5.75$). The semester gain was marginally significant with a medium effect ($z = 2.304$, $\text{adj.}p = .064^+$, $r = .303$). The summer decrease was not significant, but a small effect size was shown ($z = 1.233$, $\text{adj.}p = .218$, $r = .162$). The Never group improved from April ($M = 32.7$, $SD = 6.58$) to July ($M = 34.6$, $SD = 6.60$), followed by a drop in September ($M = 33.0$, $SD = 7.57$). The spring gain was statistically significant ($z = 4.465$, $\text{adj.}p < .001^{***}$, $r = .245$, small effect), and the summer decline was also significant ($z = 4.111$, $\text{adj.}p < .001^{***}$, $r = .226$), again a small effect. In sum, only the Higher group was able to sustain sentence mastery gains over the break.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary improved significantly for all groups during the semester, with minimal change over the summer. The Higher group rose from April ($M = 29.5$, $SD = 5.47$) to July ($M = 33.6$, $SD = 6.74$), and remained stable in September ($M = 33.7$, $SD = 9.23$). The semester gain was marginally significant ($z = 2.380$, $\text{adj.}p = .052^+$, $r = .359$, medium effect), and no statistical change was seen in the summer ($z = 0.244$, $\text{adj.}p = .808$, $r = .037$). The Lower group increased from April ($M = 29.5$, $SD = 7.06$) to July ($M = 32.6$, $SD = 6.39$), then declined slightly in September ($M = 32.0$, $SD = 8.68$). The April–July gain was statistically significant ($z = 3.002$, $\text{adj.}p = .008^*$, $r = .394$, medium effect), and the summer change was not significant ($z = 0.493$, $\text{adj.}p = .622$, $r = .065$). The Never group moved from April ($M = 29.5$, $SD = 6.85$) to July ($M = 32.2$, $SD = 8.28$), then to September ($M = 31.6$, $SD = 7.87$). The semester gain was significant ($z = 4.099$, $\text{adj.}p < .001^{***}$, $r = .225$), showing a small effect, while the summer decline was not significant ($z = 0.916$, $\text{adj.}p = .360$, $r = .050$). It was suggested that vocabulary gains occurred during the semester and were retained over the summer in all groups.

Discussion

The Role of Classroom Interaction in Oral Proficiency Development in EFL Contexts (RQ1)

This study first examined how learners' oral proficiency changed across the spring semester and the subsequent summer vacation, comparing first- and second-year students. The results revealed the pedagogical value of structured, interactive classroom activities in fostering core aspects of spoken English performance in EFL contexts such as Japan. In particular, improvements were observed in dimensions closely tied to real-time speech production (fluency and pronunciation) while development in grammar and vocabulary showed a more differentiated pattern by year group. These findings provide insight into how different components of oral proficiency may respond differently to classroom-based instruction and to subsequent absence of input.

For both first- and second-year students, fluency and pronunciation scores improved during the semester. These gains, supported by small effect sizes, point to the impact of interaction-focused lessons in facilitating smoother and more intelligible speech. However, during the summer break, learners' gains in both domains stagnated. This pattern reinforces the notion that

regular opportunities for output and feedback, as provided by classroom interaction, are essential for developing and sustaining prosodic and articulatory fluency (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Zhang, 2009). The absence of such interaction may hinder learners' improved performance in these areas, due to reduced procedural use of language skills (Hakuta et al., 2000).

Sentence mastery and vocabulary, by contrast, showed gains only among first-year students during the semester, with no notable change observed among second-year learners. This discrepancy likely reflects the difference in baseline oral proficiency, as second-year students had already completed one year of similar coursework. The improvements observed in first-year students may reflect the effectiveness of instructional input in consolidating morphosyntactic and lexical knowledge during earlier stages of acquisition (Muñoz, 2014). However, these gains were not fully retained during the vacation period. Sentence mastery declined slightly among first-years and remained flat among second-years, while vocabulary scores remained statistically stable across both groups. This suggests that beyond the initial stages of acquisition, both sentence formation and vocabulary breadth may require targeted instruction and recycling to facilitate sustained improvement (Trofimovich et al., 2009; Nation, 2007).

In summary, the results from RQ1 support the effectiveness of interactive classroom instruction in promoting short-term improvements in fluency and pronunciation. However, morphosyntactic and lexical skills may require different pedagogical inputs and may be more vulnerable to regression in the absence of continued engagement. The findings also highlight the difficulty of maintaining oral proficiency during instructional breaks in EFL environments where learners have limited access to authentic communication opportunities (Teeter, 2017).

The Impact of Intensive Self-Training During Summer Vacation (RQ2)

The second part of the study investigated the extent to which intensive self-training during the summer vacation could help learners maintain or enhance their oral proficiency. While the three groups (Higher; Lower; and Never) showed comparable progress during the spring semester, their trajectories diverged over the summer break. This section focuses on these differences during the vacation period, when classroom instruction was absent and learners' engagement with self-training varied.

With regard to fluency, learners in the Higher participation group (29–47 days of training) demonstrated continued improvement from July to

September. Although not statistically significant, the notable effect size was observed, suggesting that regular practice may have supported incremental gains. The Never group, by contrast, experienced statistically detectable declines, albeit with small effect sizes, while the Lower group (1–17 days of training) remained relatively stable. These findings suggest that the frequency and consistency of self-training influenced learners' ability to sustain fluency, supporting the idea that proceduralized language skills require ongoing rehearsal (Foote & McDonough, 2017; Kadota, 2019).

Pronunciation followed a similar pattern. The Higher group showed small gains over the summer, though not statistically significant. In contrast, the Never group experienced statistically significant decline, and the Lower group exhibited minimal change. These patterns imply that consistent self-practice, particularly through shadowing, may help reinforce articulatory habits and prosodic features that are otherwise prone to attrition during breaks in instruction (Cooper, 2003). While lower levels of training did not lead to gains, they may have served to buffer against substantial decline.

Sentence mastery showed clear differentiation among the groups. Only the Higher group was able to maintain their performance over the summer. The non-significant decline over the summer observed in the Higher group suggests that even though shadowing is not explicitly focused on grammar, repeated exposure to and production of grammatical structures may contribute to the retention of sentence-level accuracy. Conversely, both the Lower and Never groups exhibited declines with small effect sizes. Insufficient practice, as seen in the Lower and Never groups, appears to leave learners vulnerable to regression in this domain.

In the case of vocabulary, all groups remained relatively stable during the summer break, with no statistically significant changes and negligible effect sizes. This stability suggests that vocabulary knowledge, particularly of high-frequency words used in everyday contexts, may be more resistant to short-term loss compared to skills like fluency or pronunciation, which are more procedural in nature. Alternatively, the absence of further gains indicates that vocabulary development may require explicit instruction and deliberate recycling (Nation, 2007), conditions not fully present in shadowing-based training.

Taken together, these findings indicate that intensive self-training, when conducted consistently and with sufficient frequency, may help preserve and even enhance certain dimensions of oral proficiency during breaks from formal instruction. While limited training can offer some protective

effect, the observed differences across groups indicate the importance of sustained engagement. In EFL contexts where learners lack naturalistic exposure, structured self-training activities, especially those involving real-time input-output processing (Kadota, 2019), can serve as a viable supplement to classroom-based learning. Encouraging autonomy through accessible and rhythmically supported tools such as shadowing may thus be a valuable strategy for long-term oral development.

Conclusion and Limitations

This study examined the temporal dynamics of EFL learners' oral proficiency by analyzing changes before and after the spring semester, as well as after the summer vacation, focusing on the roles of coursework and self-directed practice using shadowing-based tasks. Using Versant Speaking Test sub-scores (Fluency, Pronunciation, Sentence Mastery, and Vocabulary), the study tracked proficiency changes among 217 university students in two different academic years (first-year and second-year cohorts). The findings offer two key insights into how language skills develop and fluctuate depending on learners' engagement in classroom activities and autonomous practice.

First, the results confirmed that interactive, communication-focused classroom instruction contributes to measurable improvements in learners' oral fluency and pronunciation over a single semester. These short-term gains were notable in first-year students, likely due to their limited prior exposure to spoken English and the novelty of the flipped learning format. However, without sustained engagement during the summer break, learners' proficiency tended to stagnate or regress, particularly in fluency, pronunciation, and syntactic accuracy, suggesting the importance of consistent language use in maintaining oral skills.

Second, the study found that self-directed practice involving shadowing and related oral tasks during academic breaks can serve as a partial buffer against such declines. Learners who practiced more intensively tended to maintain or even slightly improve their performance in fluency, pronunciation, and sentence mastery, while those who practiced less frequently experienced minimal gains or observable regression. These outcomes emphasize the potential of structured, repetitive oral training as a means of sustaining procedural language skills outside the classroom.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings support the integration of interactive classroom activities with accessible tools for autonomous practice. Instructors and curriculum designers should consider embedding

rhythmically supported, output-based tasks like shadowing into both in-class and out-of-class learning opportunities. Moreover, institutions should provide explicit support for learner autonomy, particularly during long academic breaks when instructional input is limited.

At the same time, some limitations should be noted. First, this study did not control for participants' use of English outside the classroom, such as part-time jobs involving English or interaction with international students. Such factors may have influenced individual outcomes and should be more systematically accounted for in future research. Second, the grouping criteria for summer self-training were based on participation frequency (never; 1–17 days; 29–47 days), which, while practically motivated, involved a degree of arbitrariness. Treating participants who trained once and those who trained 17 times as a single group may obscure meaningful within-group variation. Third, the study compared learners across two academic years but did not follow individuals longitudinally, making it difficult to draw conclusions about long-term developmental trajectories. Future studies should investigate the qualitative nature of training engagement and explore more nuanced ways to capture its frequency, consistency, and intensity.

Despite these limitations, the findings contribute to our understanding of oral proficiency development in EFL contexts. The temporal dynamics of learners' oral proficiency are shaped not only by formal instruction but also by their engagement during instructional gaps. With appropriate design and institutional support, self-training approaches, especially those centered around structured oral repetition, can help EFL learners sustain and build their speaking skills beyond the classroom.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Numbers 22H00527, 23K17459, and 24K04175. The shadowing training interface used in this study, Shadowing Saver, was developed in collaboration with the research team led by Professor Nobuaki Minematsu at the Graduate School of Engineering, the University of Tokyo.

Noriko Nakanishi is a Professor in the Faculty of Global Communication at Kobe Gakuin University. Her research interests include English Phonetics, Sociolinguistics, and Education.

References

- Bachman, L., & Palmer, A. (1996). *Language testing in practice*. Oxford University Press.
- Bygate, M. (2001). Speaking. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 14–20). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667206.003>
- Cooper, H. (2003). *Summer learning loss: The problem and some solutions*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.
- Council of Europe (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
- De Jong, J. H. A. L., Mayor, M., & Hayes, C. (2016). Developing global scale of English learning objectives aligned to the common European framework. *Global Scale of English Research Series*.
- DeKeyser, R. M. (2007). *Practice in a second language: Perspectives from applied linguistics and cognitive psychology*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667275>
- Downey, R., Farhady, H., Present-Thomas, R., Suzuki, M., & Van Moere, A. (2008). Evaluation of the usefulness of the Versant for English test: A response. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 5(2), 160–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15434300801934744>
- Eyring, J. (2014). ESL and EFL learning environments. In M. Celce-Murcia, D. M. Brinton, & M. A. Snow (Eds.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (4th ed., pp. 36–51). National Geographic Learning.
- Foote, J. A., & McDonough, K. (2017). Using shadowing with mobile technology to improve L2 pronunciation. *Journal of Second Language Pronunciation*, 3(1), 34–56. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jslp.3.1.02foo>
- Hakuta, K., Butler, Y. G., & Witt, D. (2000). How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency? *The University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute Policy Report 2000*, 1.
- Hamada, Y. (2019a). Shadowing: What is it? How to use it. Where will it go? *RELC Journal*, 50(3), 386–393. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688218771380>
- Hamada, Y. (2019b). *Teaching shadowing for listening: Developing learners' bottom-up skills*. Routledge.
- Isbell, D. R., & Kremmel, B. (2020). Test review: Current options in at-home language proficiency tests for making high-stakes decisions. *Language Testing*, 37(4), 600–619. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532220943483>

- Kadota, S. (2019). *Shadowing as a practice in second language acquisition: Connecting inputs and outputs*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351049108>
- Kunihara, T., Zhu, C., Minematsu, N., & Nakanishi, N. (2022). Gradual improvements observed in learners' perception and production of L2 sounds through continuing shadowing practices on a daily basis. *INTERSPEECH Proceedings*, 1303–1307. <https://doi.org/10.21437/Interspeech.2022-101>
- Lambert, S. (1992). Shadowing. *Meta*, 37(2), 263–273. <https://doi.org/10.7202/003378ar>
- Lee, G., & Wallace, A. (2018). Flipped learning in the English as a foreign language classroom: Outcomes and perceptions. *TESOL Quarterly*, 52(1), 62–84. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.372>
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2013). *How languages are learned* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Mayor, M., Seo, D., De Jong, J. H. A. L., & Buckland, S. (2016). *Technical report: Aligning CEFR-J descriptors to GSE*. <https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/pearson-languages/en-gb/pdfs/gse/gse-resources/gse-research-reports/technical-report-aligning-cefr-j-descriptors-to-gse.pdf>
- Minematsu, N., Nakanishi, N., Gao, Y., & Sun, H. (2023). A unified framework to improve learners' skills of perception and production based on speech shadowing and overlapping. *INTERSPEECH Proceedings*, 3667–3668.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). (1956). 大学設置基準 [Standards for the establishment of universities]. Retrieved from https://laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/331M50000080028#Mp-Ch_6
- Mizumoto, A. (2015). Langtest (Version 1.0) [Web application]. Retrieved from <http://langtest.jp>
- Muñoz, C. (2014). Contrasting effects of starting age and input on the oral performance of foreign language learners. *Applied Linguistics*, 35(4), 463–482. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu024>
- Nagle, C., Baese-Berk, M., & Trofimovich, P. (2025). High variability phonetic training: The role of talker variability and practice. *Language Learning*, 75(1), 142–170. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12577>
- Nakanishi, N. (2023). *Eigo Shadowing 100pon Knock*. Cosmopier.
- Nakanishi, N., Minematsu, N., & Kunihara, T. (2022). Effects of English shadowing training using unlearned passages on listening and speaking skills. *Language Education & Technology*, 59, 77–105. https://doi.org/10.24539/let.59.0_77
- Nakanishi, N., Musty, N., Otake, S., Tam, S. Y., Ebihara, Y., & Fujimura, K. (2023a). *Global perspectives: Listening & speaking book 1*. Seibido.

- Nakanishi, N., Musty, N., Otake, S., Tam, S. Y., Ebihara, Y., & Fujimura, K. (2023b). *Global perspectives: Listening & speaking book 2*. Seibido.
- Nakanishi, N., Tam, S. Y., & Ebihara, Y. (2019). ICT教室の特性と音声認識ソフトを活かした英語リスニング・スピーキング活動の可視化 [Visualizing English listening and speaking activities using speech recognition software in ICT-enhanced classrooms]. *Japan Universities Association for Computer Education ICT Riyouniyoru Kyoiku Kaizen Kenkyu Happyokai*, 153–156.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2007). The four strands. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1(1), 2–13. <https://doi.org/10.2167/illt039.0>
- Okamura, A. (2013). Versant and advanced L2 speakers' ratings of Japanese learners' oral English. In J. Levis & K. LeVelle (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 4th pronunciation in second language learning and teaching conference* (pp. 16–28). Iowa State University.
- Pearson. (2022). *Versant English speaking test: Test description and validation summary*. Pearson Education.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–253). Newbury House.
- Teeter, R. (2017). Japanese university students' attrition in L2 listening proficiency: A case study. *JALT Journal*, 39(1), 25–43.
- Trofimovich, P., Lightbown, P. M., Halter, R. H., & Song, H. (2009). Comprehension-based practice: The development of L2 pronunciation in a listening and reading program. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 31(4), 609–639. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263109990040>
- Zhang, S. (2009). The role of input, interaction and output in the development of oral fluency. *English Language Teaching*, 2(4), 91–100. <http://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v2n4p91>

Expositions

Class in English Language Teaching and Learning Research

David Block

Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Class has always been a key mediating factor for access to and performance in education, even if the attention it has received has varied: In some cases, it has been minimal, and in other cases, the construct has suffered a kind of erasure (i.e., it has disappeared from the lexicon of researchers). The trend toward the latter has been particularly pronounced in research in language education, and in particular, English teaching and learning. This chapter argues that class is a useful construct in such research. It is divided into 2 parts of unequal length. The first part presents and discusses thinking about class and the author's current understanding of it. The second part is a speculative discussion of a possible new direction for future research on English-language teaching and learning which incorporates class as a key construct.

階級は常に教育へのアクセスと成績の重要な仲介要因として機能してきました。ただし、それに対する注目度は場合によって異なります:一部の状況では最小限に留まり、他の状況ではこの概念が研究者の用語から消え去るような「消去」という現象が見られました(つまり、研究者の用語から消えてしまいました)。後者の傾向は言語教育の研究、特に英語の教授と学習に関する研究において特に顕著です。この論文では、階級がこのような研究において有用な概念であるとの主張を展開します。論文は不均衡な長さの2つのパートに分かれています。第1部では、階級に関する著者の現在の理解を提示し議論します。第2部は、階級を主要な概念として組み込んだ英語教育と学習の将来の研究における新たな方向性に関する推論的な議論です。

Keywords: class; English language teaching and learning; Marxist thought; political economy

<https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJJ47.2-2>

JALT Journal, Vol. 47, No. 2, November 2025

Writing five decades ago about how one of the key functions of an education in capitalist society is to prepare students for the class positions that they will eventually occupy, Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that “schooling fosters and rewards the development of certain capacities and the expression of certain needs, while thwarting and penalising others” (p. 129). In this way, an education system “tailors the self-concepts, aspirations, and social class identifications of individuals to requirements of the social division of labor” (ibid). Stating matters in this way, Bowles and Gintis were, in effect, reproducing the ideas of other noted anti-capitalists from the distant and not so distant past. I am thinking here of Marx (1990), who explained how the denial of education to child factory workers in mid-nineteenth century England was a way for the capitalist class to keep the proletariat in its place, and Gramsci (1971), who wrote about the great division in Italian education in the early twentieth century between “the vocational school for the instrumentalist [working] classes [and] the classical school for the dominant classes and the intellectuals” (p. 26). Indeed, whether it be via denial or segregation, this kind of division in education is vital to the ongoing reproduction of class relations in capitalist societies, and it has been the focus of multiple publications of varied stripes over the years.

For example, in the late 1950s, Michael Young (1958) published an influential novel about a future British society dominated by the notion of meritocracy, in which those who are naturally able and who, in addition, apply themselves to academic study, come to rule society as members of the educated elite class. In a similar vein, Pierre Bourdieu cast an anthropological gaze on French society and the class privilege of the educated elites in possession of *distinction* in the 1960s and 70s (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). A decade later, in the United States, there was a good number of notable ethnographic and ethnographically-oriented studies of class in education. Two well-known and oft-cited examples are Shirley Brice Heath’s (1983) detailed examination of the literacy practices of white and black working-class families in a mill town in a southern state in the 1970s and Penny Eckert’s (1989) analysis of class-inflected linguistic variation and change in a Michigan high school in the 1980s. Moving into the 1990s and 2000s, Michelle Lareau and Lois Weiss examined the class divide in education in the United States from two different class perspectives. Lareau (2011) focussed on the growing trend among upper middle-class American parents to devote a great deal of time and effort to what she termed the ‘concerted cultivation’ of their children. Concerted

cultivation implies the extremely hands-on and enhanced monitoring of children's development by parents, which includes, among other things, enrolment in multiple extracurricular activities and attempts to form them as 'critical' thinkers and communicators (Lareau, 2011). Meanwhile, Weis (1990) followed a cohort of working-class young people, first in their high school days in the 1980s and then some years later, as they tried to survive in a hostile job market dominated by global capitalism (Weis, 2005). In the 2010s, scholars in countries such as China (Sheng, 2014), Japan (Kiriya, 2013), and India (LaDousa, 2014) continued in a similar vein, dissecting the very different iterations of class divisions in education in their respective countries. More recently, Daniel Markovits (2019) offers a well-documented critique of the merit myth and persistent inequality in American society, while Sharon Jones (2023) examines class reproduction in British education, basing her analysis on the accounts of participants.

One outstanding characteristic of these publications is the fact that the authors have situated class front and centre in their research. As I have suggested elsewhere (Block, 2014; 2015), this inclusion and even prioritising of class as a key construct is not especially common in educational research. This is the case even less so in research focusing on English language teaching and learning (hereafter ELTL), the main interest of the readers of *JALT Journal*. My starting point in this paper is that class is of crucial importance in any understanding of a range of events and phenomena in society today, as we make our way through the third decade of the digital age. This premise leads me to begin my discussion with a general, though selective discussion of class as conceptualised by scholars, from Marx to Bourdieu. This discussion is followed by the presentation of my own particular view of class. The final part of the paper offers some suggestive comments about how class might be incorporated into research on ELTL.

Class As Understood by Others: A Brief and Partial Discussion

Marx (e.g., 1990 [1867]) is a common starting point for a discussion of class, even if he never actually provided a clear-cut definition of it in his work (Block, 2014). Nevertheless, one can glean what he meant by class from his discussions of the relationship between individuals and collectives and the means of production in England and other industrialising European countries in the 19th century, and how from these relations there arose very different class-based ways of life and class-based consciousnesses. Scholars writing about class after Marx, from the 1880s onwards,

bore witness to the increasing complexification of societies, with Emile Durkheim (1984 [1893]) first, and later Max Weber (1968 [1922]), being the sociologists who most thoroughly reconfigured understandings of class in the light of changes taking place. Weber's work is of particular interest as he introduced the notions of 'status' and 'status situation' as a way of making sense of inequality and stratification in industrialized societies. This inequality and stratification existed not only in terms of material conditions (economics), but also in terms of more abstract, socially constructed cultural phenomena. The latter include practices and activities such as the consumption of particular goods and engagement in particular pastimes--the display and flaunting of wealth identified by Thorsten Veblen (2007 [1899])--all of which is related to differentiable lifestyles which are valued unequally in societies in terms of what Weber (1968) called 'prestige' and what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) later called 'distinction'.

Surveying different views on class three decades ago, Ellen Meiksins Wood (2016 [1995]) suggested that there are two broad, differentiable ways of framing the construct. There is class as a 'structural *location*' and class as a 'social *relation*'. In the former approach, class is a 'form of stratification', effectively "a layer in a more hierarchical structure, differentiated according to 'economic' criteria such as income, 'market chances' or occupation" (p. 76). In class as a 'social *relation*', class appears as 'a socio-historical' phenomenon, that is, as "a relation between appropriators and producers, determined by the specific form in which, to use Marx's phrase, 'surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers'" (ibid). This is a view of class perhaps best exemplified by E.P. Thompson (1980 [1963]), who was not overly interested in categorising people by their location in hierarchical structures, including their income vis-à-vis that of others. Instead, Thompson focused on how people live and make history as emergent subjects in the social circumstances of their day-to-day existence. He thus was interested in the two key notions in Marxist thinking: 'class in itself' (i.e., class as the objective reality of interests shared with others living within the same set of life circumstances), and 'class for itself' (i.e., not only an awareness of the aforementioned objective reality but also the actions taken with others in the pursuance of improved life conditions). As Thompson (1980) explained:

[C]lass happens when [people], as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other [people] whose interests are different from (and generally op-

posed to) theirs [...] Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms; embodied in traditions, value systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class consciousness does not. (pp. 8–9)

In this understanding of class there is first and foremost *class struggle*, as the inevitable clash of interests between capitalists and proletarians, which provides the lived experiences and makes it possible for class to happen (class in itself) and *class warfare*, as class struggle in terms of the economic policies put into practice by the dominant capitalist class that constitute a very real and tangible attack on the material and existential well-being of the popular classes. As I explain elsewhere (Block, 2018), we see class warfare very clearly in the transfer of wealth that occurred as the Great Recession began in 2007–2008: in countries around the world, it was the less wealthy and poor who suffered massive home reposessions (due to owners' inability to pay their mortgages), which meant not only the loss of their home but also all of the money which had been paid on the mortgage up to that point in time. Meanwhile, in education, there was, at the time the crisis hit, a greater willingness among analysts to frame discussions of education at all levels as class warfare (Benn, 2011; Weis, 2014), in line with the earlier work of the aforementioned Bowles and Gintis (1976). Ultimately, in the realm of home ownership, in the realm of education and, indeed, in the realm of any domain of activity that people engage in, it is from the individual and collective experience of class struggle and class warfare that class consciousness emerges as class for itself, which then mediates further collective class-based activity.

A further element in Thompson's thinking is the relational nature of class, which occurs in two key ways. First, there is how a collective known as 'working class' exists in a dialectal relation to an antagonistic collective known as the 'capitalist class' (or what we may simply understand to be the 'entrepreneurial class'). In effect, all social events contributing to the making of the working class are contingent on the activities of the capitalist class. And, of course, *vice versa*: for the capitalist class to exist, there must be a working class to dominate and exploit, extracting from its members' surplus labour. The second way that class is relational can be seen in the experiences lived by individuals with fellow class members. One cannot exist as a working-class person without the existence of others in the same class condition and the experiences shared with them. Bearing all of this in mind, we may see the relationality of class as a structural/structuring

imperative---the realities of capitalism pitting groups in opposition to one another---and as a social process, which includes all the life experiences shared by working class people in their ongoing interactions with one another, both within the realm of production and beyond, in what might properly be understood as the social, political and cultural spheres of human activity.

In the midst of such thinking about class, Bourdieu (e.g., 1984) emerges as an interesting figure in the history of class-based scholarship. On the one hand, like Marx, he saw class inequality as a matter of material states and processes (see his 'economic capital' and Wood's class as 'structural location'). However more important in his work is his allegiance to notions found in the work of Weber and Thompson, as he framed class as emergent in the practices and cultural activity of individuals in fields, or domains of social activity (see his 'cultural capital', as legitimized knowledge and know-how, and 'social capital', as social relations facilitating paths to success in individual life trajectories). Over the past several decades, there has been a tendency in the social sciences and humanities---including applied linguistics---to conceptualise and discuss class in a broadly Bourdieusian manner. This has meant a somewhat unquestioning acceptance of and even embrace of Bourdieu's eclectic view of class incorporating, to a small degree, a Marxist perspective, and to a large degree, a Weberian perspective.

Notwithstanding this affinity to Bourdieu's views in most social sciences and humanities publications incorporating class as a construct, there has been some push-back, mainly by Marxist scholars. For example, Alex Callinicos (1999) criticised Bourdieu for his use of capital as a resource possessed by human beings: the famous capital metaphors---economic, social and cultural---mentioned previously. For Callinicos, this metaphorical use of capital is more indicative of a limited grasp of political economy than cutting edge social analysis. In a similar vein, David Harvey (2014) expressed his profound objections to Bourdieu's characterisation of personal endowments "as a form of capital" (p. 186), arguing that while "capital undoubtedly uses [...] signs of distinction in its sales practices and pitches [...] that does not mean that distinction is a form of capital" (ibid: 187). For Harvey, distinction is about the symbolic orders emerging from and intertwined with the ongoing development of capitalism and the economic inequalities which come with this development. It therefore does not need the label 'capital', even if it is obviously part and parcel of the sociocultural construction of class and inequality in contemporary

societies. Ultimately, a Marxist critique of Bourdieu reveals what Marnie Holborow (2015) describes as his “intention [...] to reassert the force of the cultural and symbolic, including language, over and beyond the economic” (p. 59). Nevertheless, despite these and other reservations about aspects of Bourdieu’s work, his view of class, as I noted earlier, has become central to any discussion of the phenomenon, and in my own work on this topic over the years, I have taken some of his ideas on board, albeit in my own particular way. It is to my view of class that I turn to in the next section.

Class As I Understand It

Over the past twenty years, I have gradually developed a way of framing class for my own research purposes. I have, first and foremost, drawn on the foundational work of Marx. I have then incorporated ideas gleaned from my reading of Weber, and then later, drawn on the contributions of Thompson, Wood, Bourdieu, and many other scholars and their different approaches. I have also been influenced by broad surveys conducted over the past 25 years, as outlined in detail in publications such as Bennett et al. (2009) and Huguée et al. (2020). The latter publication presents the results of an ambitious project examining class in 26 EU member states, using the ‘European Socio-Economic Groups’ (ESEG) classification scheme (INSEE, 2016). The ESEG has seven general groups divided into thirty subgroups, which Huguée et al. convert to three broad class categories—‘dominant’, ‘middle’, and ‘working’. Although there are considerable problems with questionnaire-based models of class, not least their relatively static view of social realities (see the discussion of class as ‘social location’ above), these models do nonetheless have the advantage of providing a clear benchmark for differentiating people in terms of their relative and respective class positions. With this redeeming feature in mind, I reproduce in Table 1 below a working list of class positions. I have added a fourth class category, the ‘outer class’, in order to include those who are (1) employed outside of the formal, *official* economy; (2) semi-employed or precariously-employed (off and on) in low-paid, low-status work; and (3) long-term unemployed. This addition is important because in much research, class is linked mainly to type of employment, thus excluding those who in the past have been called ‘the underclass’ (Wilson, 1987), ‘the outcasts’ (Wacquant, 2008), or even just ‘the poor’ (Gans, 1995).

Table 1*A 4 Class/10 Group Model (Based on Huguée et al., 2020)*

Class	Employment Sectors
Dominant class	
1) The '1 %'	magnates & wealthy entrepreneurs (media, industrial, retail); chief executive officers; successful entertainers; national & global politicians/policy makers
2) Managerial & entrepreneurial	senior managers; medium-level entrepreneurs
3) Professionals	science, engineering, information, & communications technology (ICT); academic & research; health & medical (doctors); business & administration; legal & judicial, social & cultural
Middle class	
4) Technicians & associated professionals	retail & hospitality management (hotels, restaurants, bars); health & medical (e.g. nurses); business & administration (e.g. accountants); legal, social & cultural
5) Small entrepreneurs	retail & hospitality (hotels, restaurants, bars); farmers; small company owners (including technology-based start-ups)
6) Clerks & skilled service employees	Law enforcement; administrative support in multitude of sectors; customer services; personal care; armed forces & protective services
Working class	
7) Industrial skilled employees	Building & related trade; food processing, wood working, garment trade; metal, machinery, printing, electrical & electronics; stationary plant & machine operators; assemblers; drivers
8) Less skilled employees	Personal services & sales; food preparation; cleaning; agriculture

Class	Employment Sectors
Outer class	
9) Extra-official, semi employed, low-paid	Collecting (e.g. garments, sheet metal, furniture); off-the-books delivery; off-the-books in sectors 7 & 8
Unemployed	Out of work, probably on government subsidy

As for the kind of criteria one might use to situate individuals in this class scheme, that is, the multiple dimensions that index class in different ways in different contexts, cultures, and societies, I have tended to use qualitative categories as opposed to statistical ones. The result is what I call a *constellation of interrelated dimensions* model (Block, 2014), which consists of five general categories subdivided into specific social relations as follows:

Economic resources

- Property: land and housing
- Property: other material possessions, such as electronic goods, clothing, books, art, etc.
- Income: salary and wages
- Accumulated wealth: savings and investments

Sociocultural resources

- Occupation: manual labour, unskilled service jobs, low-level information-based jobs, professional labour, etc.
- Education: level of formal education attained and the corresponding cultural capital acquired
- Technological know-how: familiarity and ability to use evolving technologies
- Social contacts and networking: people regularly associated with as friends and acquaintances in class terms (the extent to which middle-class people tend to socialize with middle-class people, working-class people with working-class people, and so on)
- Societal and community status and prestige: embodied, achieved, and ascribed

Behaviour

- Symbolic behaviour (e.g., how one moves one's body, the clothes one wears, the way one speaks, how one eats)
- Consumption patterns: choice of shops, buying brands or not, ecological/organic consumption, etc.
- Pastimes: golf, skiing, cockfighting, online for participation

Life conditions

- Political life: one's relative position in hierarchies of power in society
- Quality of life: in terms of physical and psychological comfort and health
- Type of neighbourhood: a working-class neighbourhood, a middle-class neighbourhood, an area in the process of gentrification
- Spatial conditions: how much space one has to live in
- Mobility: physical movement, from highly local to global
- Proximity to other people during a range of day-to-day activities
- Dimensions and size of space occupied: layout of dwelling or place of work, size of bedroom; size of office, etc.
- Type of dwelling: trailer, house (detached/semidetached), flat (studio, small, large), etc.

The understanding of class that I present here is not without its problems, and 'handle with care' seems to be a good caveat to insert at this point. I say this not least because the model itself is under a constant state of revision (compare this version to an early one in Block, 2012), as my ongoing reading about class in different contexts across time leads me to add, delete, and reorder the various dimensions listed under the five headings (and the five headings are, of course, subject to revision as well). In addition, there is a degree of conceptual and categorical slippage in the conflation of more material aspects with more cultural, status-oriented ones, and the relative acceptability of combining what in effect are Marxist and Weberian perspectives. This issue of Marx/Weber commensurability vs. incommensurability has been the subject of a great deal of debate for some time (e.g., Giddens, 1973; Wright, 2015), although space does not allow a thorough treatment here (see Block, 2014 for a discussion). All of this reminds us of the complexity of class as something of a moving object

which evolves as societies themselves evolve, and that we perhaps need to accept a degree of conceptual messiness.

What to Do With All of This

Over the years, I have engaged in many discussions of class, with students, with fellow academics, and with members of what we might call the lay population, that is, people with no connection to the world of academia and formal study. Across these different groups, I have found that no two interlocutors come to the topic in exactly the same way. Still, I have noted three dominant trends in comments that have been made to me. First, there is the claim that Marx is ‘so nineteenth century’, ‘so white’, ‘so male’ and ‘so western’ and for all of this, irrelevant in any discussion of contemporary society. Second, there is the claim, advanced from the beginning of the neoliberal era by scholars such as André Gorz (1982), that the political economy of societies worldwide has evolved to the point that we cannot, with any authority, talk about class. Third and finally, there is the claim that key dimensions of identity (see Block, 2022), in particular race and gender, are simply more important than class or that they are *the* fundamental, deeper-level, real structuring mechanisms in society.

Regarding the first claim, it is my belief that we can always learn from reading works available to us from the past, be this antiquity and or the past two centuries. I say this because, following Bakhtin (1981[1934-35]), I believe that all words uttered or written in the present “cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads” engendered in the past. When I read contemporary scholars, I see very little that is, strictly speaking, original or unique. Presentism is not a good guide for academic inquiry; recognizing the historical, *heteroglossic* and *intertextual* nature of all texts is.

With regard to the claim that class does not exist today because society has, in effect, moved on, I can cite several present-day phenomena as challenges. First, there are the exploitative conditions under which thousands of millions of people today work in the production of commodities in the so-called emerging economies of the world (from Malaysia to Mexico). In many ways, these contexts are not very different from those described by Friedrich Engels (2009 [1845]) in his compelling account of the condition of the English working class in the mid-nineteenth century. Second, there is the fact that the inherent and fundamental logic of capitalism, and the concomitant class struggle and class warfare that emerge as this logic becomes material reality, do not disappear because the citizens of the wealthy

countries of the world live in a digitised society in which old-school industrial production has, to a great extent, been off-shored. Ultimately, we need to think critically about what occurs in the present to see how the *same old* continues in global capitalism: the drive for profit among those in the entrepreneurial and rentier classes (e.g. the wealth accumulated by big tech founders and property magnates, respectively); the continued slow burn of accumulation by dispossession, whereby the wealthy take from the poor (see my mention of home repossession above); and the ongoing exploitation of workers as political and economic elites collude to prevent legislation guaranteeing a minimum wage sufficient to live on.

The third claim, that class is not as important as different dimensions of identity in shaping our day-to-day and long-term experiences, falls down if we consider that we are not involved here in an exercise in either/or (either identity or class). In my work, I align with what Patricia Hill Collins (2019) has written about intersectionality, and in particular her notion of a *matrix of domination* which is composed not only of systemic -isms related to identity dimensions--racism, sexism, natalism, age-ism, LGBTQ+ phobia and so on--but also the political economy of societies, specifically the oppressive elements constitutive of capitalism (economic exploitation, alienation of workers, class warfare, etc.). I also align with the work of Nancy Fraser over the years (see Fraser, Bua & Vlahos, 2024, for a recent account). Fraser argues for *transformative* political action that would reconfigure ideologies and dominant structuring mechanisms related to identity *and* class, leading to true revolution resulting in a better society characterised, among other things, by equality rather than inequality. Although she has often seemed to separate identity-based *recognition* politics from class-based *redistribution* politics, her intent has always been to unite these causes.

I could go on, but for reasons of space, I will not. Suffice it to say that my position here is: (1) that teachings of scholars past should be taken into account in discussion about society today; (2) that I see class (and class struggle and warfare) in so much that occurs today; and (3) that a focus on class does not mean, *ipso facto*, a lack of focus on identity dimensions such as race and gender. I now move to what my discussion of class thus far means for research on ELTL. How does class as a key aspect of our being in the world exist in any number of activities constituting ELTL at a given point in time?

Class in ELTL: Some Thoughts

Nearly two decades ago Alastair Pennycook (2007) wrote about the promise of English to the millions of actual and potential learners of what is generally considered *the* international language and *the* global *lingua franca* that greases the wheels of global capitalism, while acting as the dominant medium of communication in a range of social domains, from higher education to TikTok videos. Pennycook discusses common myths about English in the following way:

English holds out promise of social and economic development to all those who learn it (rather than a language tied to very particular class positions and possibilities of development) [...] English is a language of equal opportunity (rather than a language which creates barriers as much as it presents possibilities). By contrast with these myths around English, I would point to the collusionary, delusionary and exclusionary effects of English. This thing called English colludes with many of the pernicious processes of globalisation, deludes many learners through the false promises it holds out for social and material gain, and excludes many people by operating as an exclusionary class dialect, favouring particular people, countries, cultures and forms of knowledge. (pp. 100-101)

Here, Pennycook (2007) takes on the notion that English, once learned, acts as the great equaliser and a key mediator of class mobility in an upward direction, as well as the means through which those studying it will become competitive subjects in the global neoliberal order. It is the unquestioning belief in this power of English that undergirds what one finds in so many educational systems around the world, as politicians, administrators and stakeholders alike promote an English-for-all policy which means, in practice, that everyone studies English for several years of primary and secondary school.

Contrary to these raised expectations, what awaits most students of English is a series of hard realities. Among these realities is the likelihood that very few learners of English will ever acquire a 'native' accent and 'native-like proficiency' in terms of grammar and lexis. Instead, they will encounter said accent and proficiency as 'an exclusionary class dialect', in Pennycook's words. In addition, while the acquisition of proficiency in English is sold as a way for people to move from working class and outer

class positions to middle class and even dominant class positions, it is ultimately one's positioning with regard to the dimensions constituting class--economic resources, sociocultural resources, behaviour, quality of life and spatial relations--that will be the primary shaper of how much a learner actually achieves through formal instruction. This is the case in the vast majority of education contexts, and it is interrelated with the ever-broadening gap between the haves and have-nots in countries around the world (Milanovic, 2018). In this way, the English divide may be seen as something of a proxy for broader economic inequality in society.

To make this point we might consider the following profile of an English language learner, aged 14, in Country X:

She is from a poor background, her parents working as fully employed or semi-employed labourers in the low-paid, 'unskilled' services sector.

Her parents have little formal education or technological knowhow, and do not have social contacts or status in society.

Her parents do not own property and do not have many material possessions, such as a computer.

Her parents cannot help their daughter in the acquisition of behaviours valued in society.

She lives in a poor neighbourhood with a high level of criminality, in a small dwelling with poor plumbing and ventilation, and she shares a bedroom with two other siblings.

Life is more a matter of survival than achievement.

This is not the optimal profile for an English language learner, which is not to say that there are not exceptions, that is, examples of people who overcome adversity and experience academic success and upward class mobility in their lifetimes. There surely are. However, my point here is that for young people growing up in the kind of material and social environment just portrayed (and I apologise for the simplicity of my portrayal), the mere study of English in school is not going to lift them and those living in similar conditions out of poverty. For this to happen, there needs to be a transformation of society at large that would eliminate the economic structures currently in place, replacing them with structures that would place economic equality at the forefront of objectives, as opposed to GDP growth, employment and inflation.

In ELTL circles, learners have been framed in different ways as regards *who they are* by researchers with different interests. Mainstream SLA researchers have tended to see them as operators of a language acquisition device, or as information processors, or as the embodiment of a long list of socio-psychological and personality traits (e.g. aptitude, motivation, attitudes, etc.). Meanwhile, language and identity researchers have tended to see learners in terms of key dimensions such as race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, age, sexuality and religion. What I propose here is to see learners according to all of these criteria, but to also take into account class as a key mediator of ELTL processes. As for an example of how class-based analysis may be brought into research on ELTL processes, I cite Carly Collins's (2023) explorative study of how class is a key shaping factor in the learning of English outside formal contexts in Barcelona (e.g., in the workplace).

In her research, Collins relied primarily on interview data (both one-on-one and group) to examine and analyse the life stories and language learning experiences of the members of three small cohorts: (1) six people working in relatively low-skill jobs serving others (e.g., restaurant and hotel staff); (2) six people working in the professions (e.g., law, engineering, banking); and (3) eleven first-year business students at a small private university in Barcelona. Among other things, she found that her informants were reluctant to talk about themselves in terms of class, a trend one encounters in many contexts around the world (Block, 2014). She also found that some of her informants who were highly proficient in English subscribed to the view that their success was an outcome of their own individual effort, and not due to their middle-class backgrounds, which would have afforded them more opportunities to learn the language during their years in formal education. However other informants in the study at least acknowledged the relationship between class and level of English, even if they also subscribed to the individualism inherent in the notion that hard work is what makes possible the achievement of a high level of English. Finally, among most of her informants, there was a general alignment with the notion, presented previously, that English is necessary if one wishes to participate in the global economy. English thus had a veneer of prestige or distinction for these informants.

While Collins's study does not cover all of the different dimensions constituting class, much less all of the class positions outlined in Table 1 above, it does provide a snapshot of how class is an integral factor in the lives of young and older adults in Barcelona who use English in their

day-to-day activities. Indeed, in her research, class emerges as a key shaper with regard to the relative proficiency of her informants as well as the ways that English gets used at work and in study. Her study is, in other words, an interesting example of class in ELTL research, along the lines of what I have argued for in this paper.

David Block is Honorary Professor in Sociolinguistics at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Over the past four decades, he has published books and chapters on a variety of topics in applied linguistics and beyond, adopting in recent years a Marxist perspective in his analysis of contemporary social phenomena. His most recent books include *Political Economy and Sociolinguistics* (Bloomsbury, 2018), *Post-truth and Political Discourse* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), *Innovations and Challenges in Identity Research* (Routledge, 2022), and *Interviews in Applied Linguistics: Autobiographical Reflections on Research Processes* (Routledge, 2024). His latest book, *Diagonalism in Online Populist Discourse: Left Moving Right*, will be published by Routledge in 2026.

References

- Bakhtin, M. (1981 [1934-35]). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. University of Texas Press.
- Bennett, T., Savage, M., Silva, E., Warde, A., Gayo-Cal, M., & Wright, D. (2009). *Culture, class, distinction*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203930571>
- Block, D. (2012). Economising globalization and identity in applied linguistics in neoliberal times. In D. Block, J. Gray, & M. Holborow (eds), *Neoliberalism and applied linguistics* (pp. 56-85). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203128121>
- Block, D. (2014). *Social class in applied linguistics*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315871141>
- Block, D. (2015). Social class in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190514000221>
- Block, D. (2018). *Political economy and sociolinguistics: Neoliberalism, inequality and social class*. Bloomsbury.
- Block, D. (2022). *Innovations and challenges in identity research*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429356186>
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction*. Routledge.

- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. Sage.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1977). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. Basic Books.
- Callinicos, A. (1999). Social theory put to the test of politics: Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens'. *New Left Review*, 236, 77–102.
- Collins, C. (2023). *Social class, life stories and English learning: Critical realist case studies from Barcelona*. [Doctoral dissertation, Universitat de Lleida]. Tesis Doctorals en Xarxa. <https://www.tdx.cat/bitstream/handle/10803/689678/Tcc1de1.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>
- Collins, P. H. (2019). *Intersectionality as critical social theory*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478007098>
- Eckert, P. (1989). *Jocks and burnouts: Social categories and identity in the high school*. Columbia University Press.
- Engels, F. (1845 [2009]). *The condition of the working class in England*. Oxford Classics.
- Fraser, N., Bua, B., & Vlahos, N. (2024). Democracy, participation, and capitalist crisis. An interview with Nancy Fraser. *Democratic Theory*, 11(1), 116–128. <https://doi.org/10.3167/dt.2024.110106>
- Gans, H. (1995). *The war against the poor*. Basic Books.
- Giddens, A. (1973). *The class structure of advanced societies*. Hutchinson.
- Gorz, A. (1982). *Farewell to the working class: An essay on post-industrial socialism*. Pluto Press.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. Lawrence & Wishart.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511841057>
- Holborow, M. (2015). *Language and neoliberalism*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315718163>
- Hugrée, C., Penissat, E., & Spire, A. (2020). *Social class in Europe: New inequalities in the old world*. Verso.
- Jones, S. (2023). *State schooling and the reproduction of social inequalities: Contesting lived inequalities through participatory methods*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003258216>
- Kiriya, T. (2013). *Education reform and social class in Japan: The emerging incentive divide*. Routledge.

- LaDousa, C. (2014). *Hindi is our ground, English is our sky: Education, language, and social class in contemporary India*. Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.3167/9781782382324>
- Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life* (2nd ed.). University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520949904>
- Markovits, D. (2019). *The meritocracy trap: How America's foundational myth feeds inequality, dismantles the middle class, and devours the elite*. Penguin.
- Marx, K. (1990 [1867]). *Capital: A critique of political economy* (Vol. 1). Penguin.
- Pennycook, A. (2007). *Global Englishes and transcultural flows*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203088807>
- Sheng, X. (2014). *Higher education choice in China: Social stratification, gender and educational inequality*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315814254>
- Wacquant, L. (2008). *Urban outcasts: A comparative sociology of advanced marginality*. Polity Press.
- Weis, L. (1990). *Working class without work: High school students in a de-industrializing economy*. Routledge.
- Weis, L. (2005). *Class reunion: The remaking of the American white working class*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203311578>
- Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. University of Chicago Press.
- Wright, E. O. (2015). *Understanding class*. Verso.
- Young, M. (1958). *The rise of the meritocracy*. Penguin.

Expositions

Criticality and Creativity in L2 Pragmatics: Supporting Linguistic Justice Through Pragmatics Instruction

Noriko Ishihara
Hosei University

Opening with a description of what the teaching of *linguistic (im)politeness* or *pragmatic competence* in an additional language entails, this *Expositions* argues that pragmatics can, and should, be incorporated explicitly into everyday teaching from the first day of instruction for all learners as it is a key component of effective intercultural communication. Through a learners-as-ethnographers approach, students can raise their (meta)pragmatic awareness and practice pragmatic language use effectively in the classroom. As with the multilingual turn in the wider field of applied linguistics, I argue that the native-speaker model may not be desirable, relevant, or achievable in pragmatics-focused instruction and that creativity and criticality often drawn upon in translanguaging interactions constitute a key feature of multilingual pragmatics. However, it should be noted that translingual practice can also be a source of linguistic racism and is sometimes romanticized to the point where it ceases to reflect the reality of multilinguals, who become targets of linguistic injustices and discrimination. Given that translanguaging is no panacea in all social or educational settings, I discuss the importance of sociopragmatic understanding of the current global climate as well as metapragmatic awareness of multilingual agency and linguistic (in)justice.

<https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJJ47.2-3>

JALT Journal, Vol. 47, No. 2, November 2025

本稿では、第二言語の(イン)ポライトネス、つまり語用論的能力の指導の概略を導入とし、語用論は効果的な異文化間コミュニケーションの重要な要素であるため、あらゆる学習者に対して指導の初日から明示的に組み込むべきであると指摘する。学習者をエスノグラフィーの研究者に例える手法を主眼とした教室での指導により、学習者は(メタ)語用論的意識を高め、語用論的な言語の使い方を効果的に練習することができる。ただ注意が必要なのは、より広い応用言語学の分野における多言語主義への転換において展開した議論と同様に、語用論のことばの使い方に焦点を当てた指導においても、母語話者のモデルが常に望ましく現実的で到達可能な目標というわけではない可能性である。むしろ、トランズランゲージングを登用したやり取りにおいて頻繁に活用される創造性と批判性こそが、多言語語用論の重要な特徴なのではないだろうか。ただし、トランズランゲージングなどの多言語使用は言語的差別の一因となる可能性があり、時には美化され過ぎて多言語話者が言語的不正義や差別の対象となり得る現実を反映しなくなる危険性にも着目すべきである。トランズランゲージングを含む多言語使用がすべての社会的または教育的状況において万能薬ではないことを踏まえ、現在のグローバルな状況に関する社会言語学的理解の重要性、および多言語話者の主体性と言語的(不)正義に関するメタ語用論的意識の重要性について論ずる。

Keywords: creativity; criticality; linguistic (in)justice; metapragmatic awareness; translanguaging; translanguing practice

In effective communication, we make linguistic choices that meet the affordances and constraints of the sociocultural context. We typically know how to greet our friends in a friendly manner and how to respectfully address our supervisors in a way preferred in the community. Pragmatic competence comprises our ability to jointly construct our meaning with our interactants both verbally and non-verbally within the given sociocultural context (LoCastro, 2003). For example, in order to “do things with words” (Austin, 1962), we often use language indirectly to convey meaning in a less imposing manner. To build or boost rapport, we often interact playfully or even sarcastically with listeners we think will appreciate such rhetoric.

Using and interpreting indirectness, implicatures (i.e., implied meaning), or irony can be a challenge for language learners as it requires reading cues, such as phonological tone, body language, technological conditions, and the social context, which interact with the implicit message behind literal meaning. Addressing someone in a socially preferred manner requires cultural or institutional knowledge; calling a lawyer *sensei* in the office, the emperor *heika* even in relatively informal occasions, or identifying oneself with a funny nickname in a university seminar, presuppose socialization into each local institutional setting. To respond to a friend’s invitation to dinner without hurting anyone’s feelings or appearing socially inept, we need to know how acceptance and refusal are typically made in the language we use in the community and negotiate our meaning jointly with

our interactional partners given their backgrounds and personalities. In other words, we are constantly building human relationships through the words we use and the demeanor we employ within sociocultural contexts.

Although an increasing number of pedagogical materials have been published to teach L2 pragmatics in the classroom, die-hard myths still prevail around pragmatics-focused instruction today. Some believe that pragmatics is a domain specifically reserved for advanced learners or cognitively developed adults and that pragmatic instruction can only fine-tune the skills language learners have already mastered (i.e., *the icing on the gingerbread*, Thomas, 1983, p.109). Others believe that pragmatic competence can be developed only by interacting with native speakers of the language. Related to these misconceptions is the belief that pragmatics should be learned in a natural setting as it cannot be effectively taught in the classroom.

Despite such myths, this *Expositions* argues that pragmatics can, and should, be incorporated into everyday teaching from the first day of instruction for all learners because it is a key component of effective intercultural communication. Explicit instruction in pragmatics in formal classroom settings has been found to effectively accelerate adults' learning even in a foreign-language context, where the target language is not typically spoken outside the classroom (Polensky & Zhuang, 2019). Pragmatic instruction has also been implemented for children and learners with disabilities or disorders, who sometimes have difficulty identifying meaning conveyed indirectly (e.g., Ingersoll, 2010; Janzen et al., 2022; Savić et al., 2025).

The reality is that learners can raise their (meta)pragmatic awareness and practice pragmatic language use effectively with their peer learners (van Compernelle, 2015) and through scaffolding provided by both "native-" and "nonnative-" speaking teachers (Cohen, 2018). Transcending this problematic dichotomy, *multilingual* speakers' and writers' metapragmatic awareness can be developed through a learners-as-ethnographers approach with critical analysis of issues related to identity and culture (for details and examples, see Ishihara, 2022).

Moreover, it has been argued that in pragmatics-focused instruction, the native-speaker model may not be desirable, relevant, or achievable (Ishihara, 2019a, 2019b, 2024; Taguchi & Caprario, 2023; Taguchi & Ishihara, 2018; Walkinshaw, 2022), as widely argued in relation to language education or language ideologies in general (e.g., Bouchard, 2022; Hiratsuka, 2024; Levis, 2024; Takeuchi, 2023b). In a recent *Expositions*, Levis (2024)

argued that intelligibility should override nativelikeness in the teaching of pronunciation and that this argument should also apply to other areas of L2 spoken language instruction, including grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatics. In response, this *Expositions* explores more concretely how what Levis calls *intelligibility* may take shape in pragmatics-focused instruction in both the spoken and written modes and how this line of argument can be furthered in the context of the multilingual turn (May, 2014) in the larger field of applied linguistics.

More specifically, I aim to question native-speakerism and underscore the nature of multilingual interaction in which multilinguals play with their hybrid linguistic resources within their repertoire by mixing, meshing, or translanguaging to enrich their communication. Similarly, learners, as emergent multilinguals, can be guided to enhance such multilingual competence by taking advantage of their hybridity rather than simply aiming for perceived native-speaker norms. In other words, I intend to highlight the creativity and criticality in multilingual pragmatics, which teachers can promote in their classrooms.

A Learners-as-Ethnographers Approach in Teaching Pragmatics

An explicit awareness-raising approach (often called *learners-as-ethnographers*) has been shown to effectively accelerate learners' pragmatic development, which is otherwise slow-paced even in second-language environments, where learners are exposed to authentic language use outside the classroom (Bardovi-Harlig, 2017). Ethnographers typically participate in the new community of practice as participant observers, and engage in interaction with locals. While doing so, they aim to make sense of contextual, sociocultural, and linguistic cues involved in the interaction, and make constant adjustments to assumptions about norms of behavior they generate as part of the process of socialization.

Similarly, learners communicating in a second or foreign language context can be advised to pay attention to their conversational partners' language and behavior along with their sociocultural backgrounds and other signs of identities (e.g., the way they consider time and space, dress, or body language). They can be invited to extrapolate intended meanings based on these characteristics observed multimodally, respond accordingly in the course of the interaction, and revise their hypotheses regarding communication.

In classroom settings, teachers should guide learners to explicitly notice (Schmidt, 2001) both pragmalinguistic (language-focused) form and the sociopragmatic (culturally-focused) context and to develop pragmatic awareness of the relationship between the language structure being used and the function it serves within the context (i.e., *form-function-context mapping*). Although a range of language forms is taught in the conventional curriculum (e.g., varied formulations of advice such as *should*, *ought to*, *had better*, *might be better to*), primary focus is too often placed on the decontextualized introduction of such language structures.

In the explicit teaching of pragmatic awareness, in addition to form, learners should be guided to pay specific attention to context such as relative power and social and psychological distance between interactants, as well as the stakes involved in the situation (adapted from Brown & Levinson, 1987) and to understand the mechanisms of underlying language choices (for examples of how learners can demonstrate this understanding both visually and explicitly, see Ishihara, 2022). Many published pragmatic-focused lessons (e.g., Tarandis et al., 2020; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010) provide instructional strategies for fostering pragmatic awareness and enhancing pragmalinguistic skills in the classroom.

For example, requests are among the most frequently taught speech acts in L2 pragmatics instruction. Teachers can guide learners to notice different linguistic forms used to express requests (e.g., *could I*, *would you*, *do you mind*, *I was wondering if*) in authentic or natural(istic) language samples and simultaneously pay attention to the social context, including relative power and distance between the interlocutors and the severity of imposition created by the request. In other words, learners can be prompted to understand the interconnection between form and context. This type of instruction prompting learners to notice and produce socially appropriate forms can be viewed as pragmatics instruction focused on pragmalinguistics.

What is less widely implemented in today's globalized era is an instructional focus on sociopragmatic aspects, in which learners are encouraged to be aware of socially preferred or less preferred behavior, depending on the sociocultural climate. An example of potential consequences of sociopragmatic failure is a *microaggression* unintentionally communicated despite kind intent on the part of the speaker. Microaggressions can be understood broadly as insults, denigrations, or subtle acts of exclusion targeting not only individuals and communities of particular race and ethnicity but also of gender, sexual orientation, national or cultural affiliation, language status,

age, (dis)ability, and religious affiliation (Cho & Corkett, 2023; Sue & Spanierman, 2020). For example, speakers may mean well when they compliment visitors to Japan on their use of basic Japanese or chopsticks with the intention of building solidarity. While recently-arrived recipients of such compliments may feel gratified, long-term residents may derive an alienating message, namely that, based on their appearance or national origin, they are not expected to be socialized into local practices. Thus, learners and teachers alike need to constantly update their sociocultural awareness of how their meaning may be interpreted differently by interactants from different backgrounds. Learners may even discuss and practice how tactfully they should speak to others or respond in case they become a target of microaggressions (see Glasgow & Ishihara, in preparation).

Similarly, Takeuchi (2023a) showed how a Japanese politician assumed a lack of Japanese language competence on the part of an international journalist and code-switched from Japanese to English in a press conference, despite the fact that she was speaking in Japanese. This unwanted code-switching act was perceived as a linguistic microaggression as it discredited the journalist's legitimacy as a speaker and alienated her. This example underscores the importance of moving public awareness in Japan from the ideology of the nation-state (assuming a one-to-one correspondence between nation, ethnicity, and language) to increasingly prevalent multilingualism within Japan, a country traditionally represented as homogeneous even under the influence of today's globalization. Without mobilizing updated sociocultural knowledge, we can offend, insult, or hurt others' feelings through well-formed language. This type of sociopragmatic awareness can be addressed as part of pragmatics-focused instruction in addition to language-focused pragmalinguistic instruction.

Focusing on Metapragmatic Awareness: Towards Criticality in Pragmatics Instruction

L2 pragmatic instruction can be viewed as critical in nature in at least two ways. On the one hand, pragmatic language use is reflective of one's identities, as pragmatic choices are regulated through *metapragmatic awareness*. While pragmatic awareness is important, what distinguishes metapragmatic awareness from mere awareness is the criticality involved in the overarching orchestration. Similar to how *metacognition* refers to the superseding awareness that orchestrates functions of cognition, metapragmatic awareness can be defined as the higher-level, umbrella knowledge of pragmatics that enables us to monitor, coordinate, reflect on,

and adjust our pragmatic uses and agency. Following Liddicoat and McConachy (2019), this overarching awareness includes explicit knowledge of multilingualistic identities and agency that can be enacted or suppressed in the sociocultural structure.

For example, it is important that learners be critically aware of their position (i.e., where they place themselves and are placed by others in the L2 community) as they make pragmatic choices. They may wish to use the pragmatic norms preferred in the community in order to assimilate into the culture and gain access to the social capital valued in its institutions. As in the saying *When in Rome, do as the Romans do*, this may be regarded as a default strategy learners use as part of successful language socialization. Alternatively, learners may at times powerfully or strategically assert their hybrid identities by resisting or straying from perceived community norms in order to exert a unique in-between position (i.e., a phenomenon termed *pragmatic resistance*). Pragmatic resistance has been documented in a number of studies, in both imagined discourses (e.g., elicited through role-plays and retrospective verbal reports, Félix-Brasdefer, 2025) and natural settings (e.g., metapragmatic interviews, Takeuchi, 2023b) (for more information about pragmatic resistance, see Ishihara, 2019b, 2024). Examples can be found in Takeuchi (2023b), in which learners of Japanese reported deliberately avoiding the forms they identified as feminine to prevent sounding excessively “girly” in order to sound like themselves or be taken seriously.

Another aspect that deepens the understanding of pragmatic resistance is shown in McConachy (2023), who highlighted the emotions and moral judgments that accompany such resistance. McConachy’s own initial embodied experience of pragmatic resistance included strategically avoiding the first-person pronoun *watashi* in Japanese as an Australian surfer, because the form seemed overly stiff, serious, and uncool. The author argued that strong moral emotions, such as disgust and shame can lead to aversive reactions and unwillingness to participate in community norms. This supports the argument that pragmatic instruction requires sensitivity if it is to avoid imposing native-speaker norms on learners, and instead allow space for creative meaning-making as part of identity negotiation (Ishihara, 2024). Thus, pragmatic instruction should include the development of metapragmatic awareness with regard to one’s own (often negative) evaluative reactions to different linguacultural differences while aiming at managing such emotions in order to achieve non-judgmental mindfulness (McConachy, 2023).

The second aspect of criticality in pragmatics instruction relates to a critical unpacking of cultural essentialism. During pragmatic instruction, learners should sharpen their metapragmatic awareness not to *essentialize* (or stereotype) others or cultures by focusing solely on dominant linguistic or cultural features. A study by Ishihara and Porcellato (2021) showed how teachers themselves co-constructed such metapragmatic awareness through collaborative mediation while sharing and critically discussing a range of pragmatic uses in relation to power in the wider sociocultural structure. For example, in teachers' professional development, a multilingual teacher in the U.S. Midwest critiqued media or popular portrayal of Peninsular Spanish in the north and south. She stated:

In Spain, there are regional differences when it comes to pragmatics and culture, although they are not as marked as the TV shows and popular jokes portray. In the north, people tend to be more distant when it comes to physical contact, and in the south, people tend to be warmer when they greet each other and meet new people. Although these differences do exist, when stereotyped, they have negative consequences. For example, TV shows in Spain sometimes equate being more distant and being smarter and portray people from the south as humble and less cultured than people from the north. (p. 162)

This teacher described how some regional varieties of Spanish are associated with greater prestige, higher or lower levels of education, cultural sophistication, or more or less humane characteristics. She revealed how a standard language ideology was prevalent in Spain, potentially leading to marginalization and prejudice targeted at speakers of certain Spanish varieties. Ishihara & Porcellato (2022) argued that teachers need to possess this type of critical metapragmatic awareness of diverse social and linguistic practices across and within communities and address such complexities in the teaching of pragmatics. Otherwise, instruction risks becoming equivalent to essentializing cultures or communities, an outcome that would defeat the purpose of intercultural communication. If inappropriately displayed in pragmatic instruction, cultural essentialism or homogenization can lead to linguistic racism. Critically acknowledging the asymmetrical power assigned to different language varieties and pragmatic variation, teachers are more likely to support the linguistic rights of students whose language or pragmatic practices may be stigmatized or marginalized in their community.

Given that such critical metapragmatic awareness needs to be shared by teachers and learners of pragmatics alike, the next section discusses how pragmatics instruction is relevant to promoting linguistic justice, leading to the reconceptualization of L2 pragmatics as *multilingual pragmatics*.

Multilingual Pragmatics: Enriching Communication Through Creativity and Criticality

Let us first reflect on how multilinguals typically rely on resources from their linguistic repertoire. As part of the multilingual turn in applied linguistics (May, 2014), research has documented how multicompetence transcends linguistic borders allowing multilinguals to often switch, mix, and mesh their named languages, which are interconnected beyond surface manifestations to creatively and rhetorically negotiate meaning (Canagarajah, 2013; Li, 2018). In this translanguaging framework, translanguaging practice is viewed as a normal communicative activity, and language learners are more powerfully reconceptualized as (emerging) multilinguals rather than nonnative speakers in deficit.

An example of creativity in translanguaging can be found in Luo and Yu (2025), who show how elite students at top Chinese universities translanguaged in a social media platform, building rapport, and providing support for each other. Among rich multimodal translanguaging practices are the puns and memes they playfully used to self-deprecatingly refer to themselves, for example by playing on the Chinese word for “losers” (*fèiwù*) and its homophonic variant “five” in English in discussing university rankings. Their creative translanguaging served as their critique for the neoliberal style of fierce competition quantifying and ranking educational achievements, which one student characterized as social Darwinism. Many participants in the virtual community empathized with this and shared similar experiences and struggles while creating a safe space of mutual support, emotional healing, and resilience. The authors argued that participants’ narratives “create[d] a space for public contemplation and systemic critique, where community members collectively interrogate[d] and challenge[d] the fundamental inequities embedded in the elite education system” (p. 9). Their translanguaging was thus both creative and critical at the same time, while bolstering solidarity and countering dominant power structures in academia. Therefore, the translanguaging playfulness enhanced, enriched, and refined the interaction in a way that would not have been attainable in one named language alone.

Given the empowering features of translanguageing illustrated above, as (emergent) multilinguals, language learners can be guided to enhance their meaning-making by taking advantage of the multiple resources within their linguistic repertoire. Rather than dutifully aiming for perceived monolingual native-speaker norms that may be neither desirable nor achievable, learners should be encouraged to creatively weave their own tapestry with their multilingual threads beyond traditional linguistic boundaries. While doing this, learners should be invited to consider the potential outcomes of translanguageing within the given context. Such metapragmatic awareness will enable them to determine in what context to translanguage and for what purposes and what repercussions this might have as translanguageing may or may not be used effectively depending on the context.

In fact, translanguageing is no panacea in all social or educational settings. Translanguageing pedagogy can enable learners to benefit academically and metapragmatically provided their strong language is used in support of their full multilingual repertoire, part of which may be devalued in schools and societies through divisive language policies or language ideologies such as monolingual policies and native-speakerism. Yet translanguageing both inside and outside the classroom is also critiqued for the challenges it presents. Dovchin (2019) illustrated how marginalized multilinguals may be bullied, mocked, or discriminated against for non-standard language use that is often frowned upon. Translingual practice can be a source of linguistic racism and is sometimes romanticized to the point where it ceases to reflect the reality of multilinguals, who become targets of linguistic injustices and discrimination (Dovchin, 2019; Kubota, 2016). Moreover, marginalized multilinguals may hold a deficit view of their own minoritized languages (Steele et al., 2025) and, as a result, may not fully exercise their translingual repertoire. Due to unequal power relations, translingual individuals or communities can be either privileged or stigmatized.

Kubota (2016) argued that we need to become more aware of this asymmetry if we are to resist and counter the oppression that may accompany multilingualism. Modeling translingual practice in a positive light in the classroom may be part of the range of strategies capable of combating linguistic inequity (Rockell, 2019). With heightened metapragmatic awareness, multilinguals will be able to assess the power positioning in the sociocultural context and thus make informed choices as to when to translanguage and when not to in accordance with the demands of the sociocultural structure. For example, in a high-stakes situation such as a job interview, multilinguals may decide to refrain from translanguageing

to protect themselves from the risk of being marginalized based on their linguistic status. In an informal multilingual context, they may opt to translanguaging sensibly so as not to exclude others who do not share the same linguistic repertoire by providing a translation or metapragmatic explanation. Knowing the rhetorical benefits and social constraints of translanguaging is part of the metapragmatic awareness teachers can promote through instruction.

Conclusion

Because monolingual native speakerism has been the prevalent institutional norm (Li, 2024; May, 2014), many multilinguals, including multilingual language teachers, neither automatically approve of their own multicompetence nor promote multilingual practice in language education (Scott, 2016). In response, continuous reiterative reflection is called for in teacher development, if criticality and creativity of multilingual pragmatics are to be maximized (Ishihara et al., 2023). Multilingual teachers must be encouraged and nurtured in teacher development in order to support learners' multilingualism within and beyond the classroom walls (Ishihara, 2024).

The teaching of English, or of any language for that matter, is a political activity in itself, intertwined with issues of linguistic rights, linguistic and social justice, and values teachers bring to the classroom (Johnston, 2003). The teaching of pragmatics invariably reflects our beliefs and values around linguacultural diversity in today's sociocultural climate. Language educators need to collaborate in enhancing the metapragmatic awareness they share with learners, who will hopefully participate in a multilingual society that contributes to linguistic justice and appreciates creative multilingual practices.

Acknowledgment

This paper was written during the author's sabbatical leave at Hosei University and funded by the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) offered by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (#22K00774).

Noriko Ishihara is a professor of applied linguistics at Hosei University, where she teaches intercultural communication, EFL, and TESOL methods. She facilitates language teachers' professional development courses in Japan, the U.S., and elsewhere, with a particular focus on L2 pragmatics and intercultural awareness. Her research interests include instructional

pragmatics, identity and culture, and (im)politeness and microaggressions in language teaching, teacher development, and aviation English. She is an author of *Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet* (2nd edition with a guest contributor Andrew D. Cohen, Routledge 2022), earlier editions of which have been translated into Arabic, Japanese, and Korean.

References

- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2017). Acquisition of L2 pragmatics. In S. Loewen & M. Sato (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of instructed second language acquisition* (pp. 224–245). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315676968-13>
- Bouchard, J. (2022). Critical applied linguistics. *JALT Journal*, 44(1), 153–169. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJJ44.1-8>
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language use*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511813085>
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2013). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203073889>
- Cho, C. L., & Corkett, J. K. (2023). Brave spaces, brave facilitators, brave conversations: Microaggressions in the online environment. In C. L. Cho & J. K. Corkett (Eds.), *Global perspectives on microaggressions in higher education: Understanding and combating covert violence in universities* (pp. 13–25). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003244394-3>
- Cohen, A. D. (2018). *Learning pragmatics from native and nonnative language teachers*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/COHEN9924>
- Dovchin, S. (2019). The politics of injustice in translingualism: Linguistic discrimination. In T. A. Barrett & S. Dovchin (Eds.), *Critical inquiries in the sociolinguistics of globalization* (pp. 84–101). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.22730537.10>
- Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2025). *The pragmatics of intercultural communicative competence: Language use and intercultural understanding in foreign language and study abroad contexts*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800414372>
- Glasgow, G. P., & Ishihara, N. (in preparation). *Microaggressions and their socio-pragmatic impact: Implications for second language pragmatics instruction in Japanese higher education*. Paper to be presented at the Sociopragmatic Symposium, Osaka (December, 2025)

- Hiratsuka, T. (2024). *Native-speakerism and trans-speakerism: Entering a new era*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009512916>
- Ingersoll, B. R. (2010). Teaching social communication: A comparison of naturalistic behavioral and development, social pragmatic approaches for children with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 12(1), 33–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300709334797>
- Ishihara, N. (2019a). Identity and agency in L2 pragmatics. In N. Taguchi (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and pragmatics* (pp. 161–175). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351164085-11>
- Ishihara, N. (2019b). Understanding English language learners' pragmatic resistance. In X. Gao (Ed.), *Second handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 621–641). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02899-2_33
- Ishihara, N. (2024). Fostering a translingual framework in teacher education focused on pragmatics: Identity and the multilingual turn in pragmatics pedagogy. *System*, 125, 103457. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103457>
- Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. D. (2022). *Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003168188>
- Ishihara, N., & Porcellato, A. M. (2022). Co-constructing non-essentialist pedagogy: Supporting teachers to support learners' translingual agency through L2 pragmatics instruction. In T. McConachy & A. J. Liddicoat (Eds.), *Teaching and learning L2 pragmatics for intercultural understanding* (pp. 151–172). Routledge.
- Ishihara, N., Porcellato, A. M., & Prado, M. C. d. A. (2023). Teachers' identity and agency in L2 pragmatics: Supporting teachers' translingual identity as pedagogy through narratives. In A. Martínez-Flor, A. Sánchez-Hernández, & J. Barón (Eds.), *L2 pragmatics in action: Teachers, learners and the teaching-learning interaction process* (pp. 89–111). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/llt.58.04ish>
- Janzen, T., Shaffer, B., & Wilcox, S. (2022). Signed language pragmatics. In V. Jef & Ö. Jan-Ola (Eds.), *Handbook of Pragmatics* (pp. 1209–1223). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/hop.m2.sig2>
- Johnston, B. (2003). *Values in English language reaching*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410606983>
- Kubota, R. (2016). The multi/plural turn, postcolonial theory, and neoliberal multiculturalism: Complicities and implications for applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 37(4), 474–494. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu045>

- Levis, J. (2024). Challenging native-speakerism: Embracing the intelligibility principle in pronunciation and spoken language instruction. *JALT Journal*, 46(2), 211–225. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJJ46.2-4>
- Li, W. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 9–30. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/aml039>
- Li, W. (2024). Transformative pedagogy for inclusion and social justice through translanguaging, co-learning, and transpositioning. *Language Teaching*, 57(2), 203–214. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444823000186>
- Liddicoat, A. J., & McConachy, T. (2019). Meta-pragmatic awareness and agency in language learners' constructions of politeness. In T. Szende & G. Alao (Eds.), *Pragmatic and cross-cultural competences: Focus on politeness* (pp. 11–25). Peter Lang.
- LoCastro, V. (2003). *An introduction to pragmatics: Social action for language teachers*. University of Michigan Press.
- Luo, H., & Yu, H. (2025). The need to create a virtual campus: Translingual practice and community building in virtual linguistic landscape. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, e12706. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12706>
- May, S. (2014). *The multilingual turn: Implications for SLA, TESOL and bilingual education*. Routledge.
- McConachy, T. (2023). Exploring pragmatic resistance and moral emotions in foreign language learning. In J. Shaules & T. McConachy (Eds.), *Transformation, embodiment, and wellbeing in foreign language pedagogy: Enacting deep learning* (pp. 177–199). Bloomsbury. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350254510.ch-8>
- Polensky, L., & Zhuang, J. (2019). A meta-analysis of L2 pragmatics instruction. In N. Taguchi (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and pragmatics* (pp. 287–307). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351164085-19>
- Rockell, K. (2019). The coding catastrophe: Translingualism and *noh* in the Japanese computer science EFL classroom. In T. A. Barrett & S. Dovchin (Eds.), *Critical inquiries in the sociolinguistics of globalization* (pp. 147–167). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.22730537.13>
- Savić, M., Myrset, A., & Economidou-Kogetsidis, M. (2025). *Researching and teaching speech acts with young L2 learners: Beneath the linguistic surface*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800412712>
- Schmidt, R. W. (2001). Attention. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction* (pp. 3–32). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524780.003>

- Scott, V. M. (2016). Multicompetence and language teaching. In V. J. Cook & W. Li (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of linguistic multi-competence* (pp. 445–460). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107425965.021>
- Steele, C., Yeatman, B., & Oliver, R. (2025). “Body for talk”: Bringing the pragmatics of indigenous contact languages into the classroom. In M. González-Lloret, J. M. Sykes, & J. K. Yoshioka (Eds.), *Pragmatics & language learning* (Vol. 15, pp. 1–18). National Foreign Language Resource Center.
- Sue, D. W., & Spanierman, L. B. (2020). *Microaggressions in everyday life* (2nd ed.). Wiley.
- Taguchi, N., & Caprario, M. (2022). L2 pragmatics research and the problem of L1 norms. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of applied linguistics* (pp. 1–4). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal20047>
- Taguchi, N., & Ishihara, N. (2018). The pragmatics of English as a lingua franca: Research and pedagogy in the era of globalization. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 38, 80–101. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190518000028>
- Takeuchi, J. D. (2023a). Code-switching as linguistic microaggression: L2-Japanese and speaker legitimacy. *Multilingua*, 42(2), 249–283. <https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2021-0069>
- Takeuchi, J. D. (2023b). *Language ideologies and L2 speaker legitimacy: Native speaker bias in Japan*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800414655>
- Talandis, J., Ronald, J., Fujimoto, D., & Ishihara, N. (Eds.). (2020). *Pragmatics undercover: The search for natural talk in EFL textbooks*. JALT Pragmatics SIG.
- Tatsuki, D., & Houck, N. (Eds.). (2010). *Pragmatics: Teaching speech acts*. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.
- Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics*, 4(2), 91–112. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/4.2.91>
- van Compernelle, R. A. (2015). *Interaction and second language development: A Vygotskian perspective*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/llt.44>
- Walkinshaw, I. (2022). *Pragmatics in English as a lingua franca: Findings and developments*. De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501512520>

Expositions

Non-cognitive Skills to Be Researched: Insights Gained From Educational Psychology

Keita Kikuchi
Kanagawa University

How can teachers help their students to learn English effectively? What are the skills important for their growth as language learners? These are fundamental questions that many English teachers have. To keep students motivated and engaged, teachers may wonder if there are important skills other than English language proficiency. In this paper, I propose that non-cognitive skills should be studied, and I introduce three well-operationalized terms: (1) *grit*, (2) *optimism*, and (3) *resilience* which might help language teachers interested in dealing with the questions posed above. After I discuss the importance of focusing on non-cognitive skills in language teaching, I introduce grit, optimism, and resilience, three noteworthy research topics which are important for understanding students who are studying foreign languages in Japan. While grit has been studied extensively in recent years within the field of Applied Linguistics, the other two topics, optimism and resilience, have received less attention. Towards the end of this paper, I take another look at non-cognitive skills using insights from the field of Positive Psychology and discuss how these topics can be studied in Applied Linguistics. It is hoped that this paper informs how language teachers can better work with students.

本稿では、日本における英語学習者の非認知能力に関して研究することの重要性に関して議論をする。非認知能力をどのように定義できるかを議論したのち、グリット、楽観性、レジリエン

<https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJ47.2-4>

JALT Journal, Vol. 47, No. 2, November 2025

スの3つの非認知能力を取り上げ、可能な限り応用言語学関連の先行文献を中心に紹介する。言語テストでよい成績をとるために重要な認知的能力を身に着けると同時に言語学習者としての成長に重要な非認知能力とはどのようなものであろうか、また教師はどのように効果的に英語を学習できるように手助けができるだろうか。そういった疑問に関して本稿では議論を行う。最後に国内の英語学習者の非認知能力を研究する際の注意点や留意点に関して取り上げる。

Keywords: grit; non-cognitive skills; optimism; resilience

What Are Non-Cognitive Skills?

Imagining how language teachers grade students in their classes, one can picture that teachers usually evaluate their performance not only on the results of tests, which require cognitive skills, but also based on class performance, which requires regular attendance. Students also need to pay attention to teachers' instructions and work with other classmates. For learning foreign languages, nobody disagrees about the importance of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Touching upon such points in the book *Giving Kids a Fair Chance*, Heckman (2017) explains:

life success depends on more than cognitive skills. Non-cognitive characteristics – including physical and mental health, as well as perseverance, attentiveness, and other socio-emotional qualities – are also essential. While public attention tends to focus on cognitive skills... non-cognitive characteristics also contribute to social success and in fact help to determine scores on the tests that we use to evaluate cognitive achievement. (p. 4)

In this quote, however, note that “characteristics”, not “skills”, was used. Non-cognitive skills can be perceived broadly. Khine (2016) observed:

The notion of ‘non-cognitive’ has many phraseological collocations. Among frequently used collocators are constructs, traits, skills, factors, abilities, variables, outcomes, attributes, and predictors... To name a few, grit, tenacity, curiosity, attitudes, self-concept, self-efficacy, anxiety, coping strategies, motivation, perseverance, confidence are among those frequently referred to in the literature. (p. 3)

For the sake of clarity, I use non-cognitive skills in this paper although they can be perceived as non-cognitive traits or simply attitudes. The Japanese translation of non-cognitive skills, “*hi-ninchi nouryoku*” or “*hi-ninchi*

skill” are commonly used in the title of book publications in Japan (e.g., Moriguchi, 2019; Nakayama, 2018; Oshio, 2021), and interested readers should consult these publications to understand the topics covered in this paper in Japanese.

Heckman cautions that the non-cognitive skills not measurable by standardized tests are rather important for helping all children to be successful in their lives. Heckman and Rubinstein (2001) observe:

Widespread use of standardized achievement and ability tests for admissions and educational evaluation are premised on the belief that the skills that can be tested are essential for success in schooling, a central premise of the educational-testing movement since its inception. (p. 145)

In teaching a college level test preparation course, for instance, while teachers certainly need to help clarify points to be studied, students could also benefit from learning about non-cognitive skills. As Kikuchi (2006) discussed, many colleges need to admit and welcome a variety of students in this era so that they can meet enrollment targets. While most students can concentrate on courses and attempt to improve test scores, some students may not possess the motivation and perseverance to study after entering college. While teachers certainly need to help clarify points to be studied, students themselves certainly need to develop non-cognitive skills to persevere and keep learning the language with energy.

Grit

Grit is arguably the most well-studied construct in our field, among other non-cognitive skills. Duckworth et al. (2007) defines it as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (p. 1087) and explain that it “entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress” (pp. 1087-1088). This is certainly an important non-cognitive skill for language learners, who need to study and practice many hours or even years to possess a good command of the language.

The reason why it drew the attention of many scholars in language learning may be that this touches upon at least two important components of a classic definition of motivation (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011), how long and how hard they work on the goals. In fact, while grit does not cover the reason why people work on long-term goals, another component of

the classic definition of motivation, it looks simpler for researchers to operationalize.

It is notable that Duckworth et al. (2007) conceptualized grit by interviewing high achievers in a variety of disciplines such as journalism, medicine, law, investment, and painting, and not only academia. Their original 12-item questionnaire included two six-item sub-scales on Consistence of Interest (CI) and Perseverance of Effort (PE), respectively. A Japanese version was developed and included in Takehashi, et al. (2019).

Recently, a language-domain grit (L2-Grit) scale was developed by Teimouri et al. (2022). In addition to the 12 items of the L2-Grit scale that they developed, they used a variety of other measures in the questionnaire, such as language joy (Teimouri, 2018), language anxiety (Taguchi et al., 2009), fixed mindset (Dweck, 2016), intended effort (Taguchi et al., 2009), attention (Teimouri, 2018), L2 willingness-to-communicate (Yashima, 2002), domain-general grit (Duckworth et al., 2007), as well as the Big Five personality traits (Gosling et al., 2003). The questionnaire was administered to 191 L1 Persian students who were studying English translation at a private college. Notably, they collected data from different sources, not merely relying on the self-perception of learners determined by the survey. Students' grades in three English courses and their GPA were checked, and teachers' perceptions of student grit were collected after a semester-long course using two 10-point Likert scales. Teachers' perceptions of their English language proficiency were also collected using a self-report measure (Taguchi et al., 2009). They collected this data to discern the validity and reliability of the L2-Grit scale and its relationship to L2 learners' motivation/emotions and achievement.

One of the authors of the original paper conducted a follow-up study (Sudina et al., 2021). They sought 457 participants enrolled in six universities in different countries (Canada, Japan, South Korea, and the United States) and administered the questionnaire with a total of twenty-five items, including the L2-Grit scale, intrinsic motivation, anxiety, and personal goals scales, which was adapted from Schmidt et al. (1996). In addition, one item, the self-perceived proficiency scale adopted from Taguchi et al. (2009), was used. Although they were primarily interested in the participant differences between the contexts of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL), 322 (70%) of the participants were EFL students in Japan. They developed two versions of the survey, a bilingual English-Japanese version and a monolingual English version since the L1 of a majority of the respondents ($N = 362$) was Japanese.

Replication of Teimouri et al. (2022) was also conducted by Mikami (2024). Based on the survey results as well as L2-specific GPA and standardized test scores collected from 106 English majors attending a Japanese university, he found that the factor structure of L2-Grit was supported, and L2-Grit was a consistent predictor of L2-specific GPA and standardized test scores. Notably, he used three scales on non-cognitive skills available in Japanese: L2-Grit (Sudina et al., 2021), domain-general grit (Takehashi et al., 2019), and self-control (Ozaki et al., 2016). A short form of the Big Five personality traits (Namikawa et al., 2012) was also used. Interested readers should consult these sources to access the instruments available.

Optimism

The next construct, optimism, is arguably one of the key constructs in the field of positive psychology. In the previous section, I presented grit, which is important for understanding the energy and fuel for language learners' development. Optimism is the construct that can be seen as their positive perspectives towards language learning. Optimistic learners may be able to enjoy their journey in their language development. Less optimistic learners may worry whether they make mistakes in their production, or their progress might be slow, while more optimistic ones are not. They can perhaps focus on their drive to their journey without worrying too much about small details during the process. Using the popular explanation of how optimistic people look at the glass half-filled with water, they do not worry about whether they have enough resources to complete the task, while less optimistic learners may focus on such matters.

Optimism is defined as "an individual difference variable that reflects the extent to which people hold generalized favorable expectancies for their future" (Carver et al., 2010, p. 879). Carver and Scheier (2014) claimed such a trait-like variable as dispositional optimism, and there are instruments to measure it such as the LOT-R (Revised Life Orientation Test). The LOT-R (Scheier et al., 1994) has been widely used in research (Toyama, 2022), and a Japanese version, which consists of 20 items (assessing both optimism and pessimism with 10 items respectively), is available (Toyama, 2013).

Unfortunately, while an interesting area of research could be assessing the optimism of language learners and the interaction of such traits with other variables, it is rare to find published research using instruments such as the LOT-R to assess the characteristics of language learners. However, motivation researchers such as Dörnyei (e.g., Dörnyei & Chan, 2013) and

Falout et al. (2011) have been discussing the importance of imagining vision and possible selves in the development of language learning. They have been discussing the importance of optimistic learners towards their future.

For example, Falout et al. (2011) developed the present communities of imagining (PCOIz) framework. In their study, teachers asked students to reflect on their past, and helped them to develop their sense of belonging to their class communities using a variety of activities including “making possible selves lists, describing possible selves, sharing job aspirations, reading and imagining about future work environments and attending an imaginary 10-year reunion” (p. 250). While there are not many empirical studies using optimism scales such as the LOT-R to test the relationship with other constructs (see Lei & Lei, 2022 for an example), it would be a good idea to include this construct in a study and find the relationship with other non-cognitive skills. In fact, one of the constructs theoretically related to optimism is resilience, and I will discuss this idea in the next section.

Resilience

In the APA Dictionary of Psychology, resilience is defined as “the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands” (American Psychological Association, n.d., p. 273). In language classes, for instance, students may fail tests and have to retake the course. Even in recent years, while many students are admitted to and enter college, some students study extra years for the possibility of entering more prestigious universities. Under such circumstances, these students need to overcome a challenging time, which can often isolate them from friends who successfully finished taking classes, or who entered the universities that they wanted to join. The students left behind may need to make adjustments in their lives and cope with the mental stress, perhaps being flexible with their life choices.

There are a variety of scholars who include different constructs in their instruments measuring resilience. One noteworthy example developed in Japan is Hirano (2010), who introduced the Bidimensional Resilience Scale (BRS). The BRS includes 21 items in two dimensions: (1) innate factors such as optimism, control, sociability, and vitality, and (2) acquired factors such as problem-solving, self-understanding, and understanding others. Using the instrument in Japanese, she recently studied the relationship

between innate/acquired resilience and socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., sex, age, education level, employment status, the number of children, and household income) among approximately 3,800 Japanese adults (Ueno et al., 2021). She also studied the development of resilience among 1,284 Japanese adults (aged 20–69) over a 2-year interval: January 2017 and January 2019 (Ueno et al., 2020). In these studies, it was reported that while resilience seemed to be relatively stable among the sample of the study despite individual variation, socio-demographic characteristics could change resilience factors. Although these studies are not related to language learning, interested readers may consult them to understand how psychologists in Japan have studied resilience.

Hiver and Solarte (2022) provided a useful overview of the research done outside of our field, and suggested some directions for resilience research in the field of language education. The key findings from psychology literature include:

1. Resilience is a powerful individual capacity.
 2. Resilience develops as an adaptive and dynamic process in context.
 3. Resilience depends on “ordinary magic.”
 4. Resilience is responsive to intervention and can be promoted.
- (pp. 206-207)

Earlier work on resilience focused on understanding the characteristics of resilient individuals, the importance of their relationships with significant others, and the function of their socio-cultural surroundings. Hiver and Solarte (2022) observe the description of resilience in this vein:

There are two dimensions to this understanding of resilience. The first concerns the existence of a threat or a risk; Individuals are not thought of as resilient unless they have encountered a significant risk or have had to grapple with a threat to their normal functioning... The other dimension is the positive adaptation aspect, whether external (e.g., the absence of substance abuse or delinquency) or internal (e.g., psychological well-being). (p. 206)

While it is important to focus on individuals who experienced a difficult time or threat to their optimal functioning, as stated above, the second wave of research in resilience focused on understanding resilience as a

process of the interaction of social and psychological factors in the environments given (Wright et al., 2013). As Luthar (2006) argued, psychologists realized that environments are important for individuals to develop their resilience. Just like motivation scholars (e.g., Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2019) in the field of language teaching observed in the 2010's, researchers of resilience also realized the importance of studying dynamic interactions between the environment and individuals.

Touching upon the third view of resilience, Masten (2009) coined the term “ordinary magic” and stated that “resilience does not require extraordinary talents or resources, but instead depends on fundamental adaptive systems” (p. 32). As observed in Chiccetti (2010), ordinary people may not realize the common occurrence of resilience in our lives. Using the fundamental adaptive systems that humans possess, we are successfully coping with possible life difficulties. Although threats may occur when such adaptive systems are damaged or destroyed, we happen to experience many events and adapt based on the situation. Such fundamental adaptive systems that we use in our everyday lives can be seen as ordinary magic.

Finally, Hiver and Solarte (2022) observe that by the appropriate intervention, resilience can be promoted. They emphasize the importance of significant others such as family members, peers, teachers, and mentors. They state that resilience “relies on gaining human capital along with social capital and marshaling these both in adaptive responses to challenges and crises (p. 207)”. Along this line, Masten (2009) states that it is important to reduce risk exposure, increase resources, and mobilize and facilitate powerful protective adaptive systems among youths to promote resilience (see Joyce et al., 2018 for a useful review of interventions that promote resilience).

With Hiver and Solarte's (2022) summary in hand, one may realize how complicated it is to research resilience in language learning. In order to research resilience in language learners' development following the definition cited at the beginning of this section, a researcher needs to evaluate language learners' flexibility and adjustment to both internal and external demands when they adapt to difficult life experiences. It may not be an easy task operationalizing this research term to conduct research related to individuals who we see in our classroom.

To focus more on the academic aspect of resilience among students, Martin (2013) coined the term ‘academic buoyancy’, differentiating it from academic resilience, and developed the construct in a paper titled, “Academic buoyancy and academic resilience: Exploring ‘everyday’ and ‘classic’ resilience in the face of academic adversity.” He defined it as:

Academic buoyancy has been defined as a capacity to overcome setbacks, challenges, and difficulties that are part of everyday academic life. Academic resilience has been defined as a capacity to overcome acute and/or chronic adversity that is seen as a major threat to a student's educational development. (p. 488)

While many students experience and negotiate the ups and downs of everyday academic life, few students probably experience acute or chronic adversity. Martin and Marsh (2009) argued that academic resilience studies typically tended to focus on ethnic groups situated in adverse conditions such as poverty or gang violence, or clinical groups such as students with learning disabilities. Thus, academic resilience studies “tend not to refer to a relatively large number of students experiencing ‘everyday’ adversities (p. 355).” For those of us who are interested in assisting language learners who go through difficult academic situations every day and helping them to be resilient in such situations, the distinction between academic buoyancy and resilience is noteworthy. Furthermore, Martin and Marsh (2009) suggest two approaches to studying them:

The first is the variable-focused approach that tests linkages among measures of degree of risk/adversity and qualities that may protect the person from negative consequences and outcomes. The second is the person-focused approach that compares people with different profiles to ascertain what differentiates resilient individuals from non-resilient individuals... We consider it important to conceptualize and assess academic buoyancy and academic resilience from both perspectives. (p. 358)

The two approaches suggested above certainly help us consider our research approach. While researchers may try to collect as much data as possible to increase their N-size, we should also consider collecting data from those with different profiles to differentiate the students whom we are interested in studying.

Possible Link With the Field of Positive Psychology

As proposed in Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) for psychology in general, studies of Positive Psychology in language learning may be

categorized according to three pillars: (1) language learners' experiences such as positive emotions, (2) language learners' positive character traits, which can lead to individual differences in language learning, and (3) positive institutions, which are ways to set up schools, classrooms, families, and governments that facilitate flourishing among language learners.

How are these topics related to the discussion of non-cognitive skills? The second of these pillars overlaps with the focus of this paper. Typically, referring to *character strengths* or simply *strengths*, scholars in the field of positive psychology have identified constructs that help us function optimally. For instance, Peterson and Seligman (2004) created the Values in Action inventory of strengths, identifying 24 strengths. Linley (2008) also listed 60 strengths, which are "a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energizing to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance" (p. 9). More specific to language learners' strengths, Lake (2016) proposed an L2 positive self-system, the idea of looking at strengths related to L2-self concepts, which can be divided into the global positive self, the positive L2 self, and the situational and dynamic L2 self.

In a more recent study, Kikuchi and Lake (2021), administered a survey on five separate occasions to about 1,000 college students when they were freshmen and sophomores in order to test the stability of Lake's model (see also, Chen et al., 2020). Constructs in the model were Curiosity, Flourishing, and Hope (global positive self); Interested in L2 self, Mastery Goal Orientation, and Passion (the positive L2 self); and L2 Self-efficacy in L2 listening, speaking, and reading (the situational L2 self). Curiosity, Flourishing and Hope, three character strengths at a global level, have been well-researched topics in the field of Positive Psychology and were included in the model along with constructs such as Passion, L2 Mastery Goal Orientation, and self-efficacy. The researchers found that the global positive self-variables (Curiosity, Flourishing, and Hope) correlated with the L2 domain self-variables (Interested in L2 self, Mastery Goal Orientation, and Passion) more strongly than the three L2 self-efficacy variables.

In another study (Chen et al., 2021), they used measurements of Grit, Interested L2 Self, Grit for L2 learning, L2 listening/reading self-efficacy, and listening/reading anxiety, and tested the model using a survey distributed to 441 Japanese university students. In this study, Grit was measured at two different levels, the global and L2 domain levels. All correlations were found to be statistically significant $p < .05$, except for L2 listening/reading anxiety with grit. Based on their findings, they discussed how general grit

is linked to L2 listening/reading self-efficacy and suggested a possible link between grit for L2 learning and L2 achievement.

As these studies suggest, a promising area of research is to hypothesize a model including research terms used in Positive Psychology and terms related to non-cognitive skills. In the next section, I move on to discuss more concrete ideas for both teachers and researchers.

What Can Language Teachers and Researchers Do About Learners' Non-cognitive Skills?

As a scholar interested in how teachers interact with students to help motivate them to study English in Japan, I often think about what this Japanese word, *ganbare* (try hard), really means when used to encourage students. As a learner of English as well, I recall that I heard this word being used when teachers were asking students to study harder or making compliments about their hard work, as in *Ganbatta-ne* (You tried hard)! When language teachers give this kind of compliment, they should be aware that students used both cognitive and non-cognitive skills for their accomplishments. While students memorized lists of vocabulary and acquired the cognitive strategies to work on readings on the test, they also acquired an ability to be gritty and optimistic to reach their goal, and they were resilient when sometimes receiving poor test results along the way.

While I was considering potential research topics for *JALT Journal* readers, I thought that discussing the importance of non-cognitive skills and introducing terms like Grit, Optimism, and Resilience would help teachers to understand what we may be telling students to do when using a word like *ganbare* (try hard). Students need to be grittier, keep setting proximal goals without being distracted, and be resilient to overcome difficulties in their learning. Of course, there are other non-cognitive skills to be researched, but as someone who intensively studied demotivation among Japanese learners of English about a decade ago (Kikuchi, 2009; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009), these research terms strike me the most, as they may explain not only the process of being demotivated, but also of bouncing back to be motivated to continue the long process of language learning.

Although I have been discussing the importance of studying grit, optimism, and resilience in this paper, I also need to point out one caveat for researchers. When we study non-cognitive skills, we should be very careful in operationalizing them. For instance, there has been criticism that grit

is just another newly created research term and we should be cautious in conducting research on this topic. Crede (2018), one of the strong critics of the idea of grit, argues that:

grit is a combination of perseverance and passion... grit scores and perseverance scores are so strongly correlated with one of the Big Five personality traits—conscientiousness—as to suggest that overall grit and perseverance as currently assessed are simply a relabeling of conscientiousness. This apparent “old wine in new bottles” phenomenon suggests that enthusiasm for grit may largely be based on the jangle fallacy, which is the belief that two very similar things are distinct merely because they have different names. (pp. 607-608)

As I have been preparing for this paper, I noticed that there is criticism about many non-cognitive skills like with grit above. Although there are a variety of research terms to be studied among non-cognitive skills, I argue for the importance of carefully designing a study based on a thorough understanding of what researchers are focusing on.

Martin and Marsh (2009) suggested that non-cognitive skills such as academic buoyancy and resilience can be studied using either a variable-focused or person-focused approach. Researchers may study non-cognitive skills and the direct/indirect effects of predictors on the variables that they would like to focus on. Alternatively, researchers can profile learners experiencing critical events and study the trajectory of such students using a case study approach focusing on persons.

For researchers interested in studying the topics described in this paper, here are some suggestions. After reading how researchers study academic resilience and academic buoyancy, which are two related constructs (Martin & Marsh, 2009), I constructed the following steps for researching non-cognitive skills such as Grit, Optimism, and Resilience:

1. Identify a group of learners who succeeded in learning a foreign language over a long period of time.
2. Identify key incidents or persons that helped the learners to focus on language learning using a variety of sources (e.g., interviews involving a variety of people involved, not only questionnaires).

3. Study how their non-cognitive skills developed during the process of language learning, ideally with the collection of data at multiple times.

Studying the non-cognitive skills that language learners possess and develop may not be an easy task. Although there are a variety of instruments available to assess some non-cognitive skills, I believe that researchers should carefully design a study not just by distributing a survey to a group of students, like throwing a net to see what kind of fish might be in it. I hope that this paper will inspire future research on non-cognitive skills in language learning in Japan, where many learners are striving to develop their language for their own success.

Keita Kikuchi is a Professor at Kanagawa University, Japan. He holds an Ed.D. in TESOL from Temple University, Japan and an MA in ESL from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. His research interests include curriculum development and second language acquisition, especially individual differences.

References

- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Resilience. In *APA dictionary of psychology*. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>
- Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Segerstrom, S. C. (2010). Optimism. *Clinical Psychology Review, 30*, 879–889. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2010.01.006>
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2014). Dispositional optimism. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 18*(6), 293–299. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2014.02.003>
- Chen, X., Lake, J., & Padilla, A. M. (2020). Self-views and positive psychology constructs among second language learners in Japan, Taiwan, and the United States. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02176>
- Chen, X., Lake, J., & Padilla, A. M. (2021). Grit and motivation for learning English among Japanese university students. *System, 96*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102411>
- Chicchetti, D. (2010). Resilience under conditions of extreme stress: A multilevel perspective. *World Psychiatry, 9*, 145–154. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2051-5545.2010.tb00297>

- Credé, M. (2018). What shall we do about grit? A critical review of what we know and what we don't know. *Educational Researcher*, 47(9), 606–611. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X18801322>
- Dörnyei, Z., & Chan, L. (2013). Motivation and vision: An analysis of future L2 self-images, sensory styles, and imagery capacity across two target languages. *Language Learning*, 63(3), 437–462. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12005>
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351006743>
- Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1087–1101. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1087>
- Falout, J., Fukada, Y., Murphy, T., & Fukuda, T. (2013). What's working in Japan?: A critical participatory looping study of EFL motivation. In M. T. Apple, D. Da Silva, & T. Fellner (Eds.), *Language learning motivation in Japan* (pp. 245–267). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783090518-016>
- Gosling, S. D., Rentfrow, P. J., & Swann Jr., W. B. (2003). A very brief measure of the big-five personality domains. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37, 504–528. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566\(03\)00046-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566(03)00046-1)
- Heckman, J. (2013). *Giving kids a fair chance*. The MIT Press.
- Heckman, J., & Rubinstein, Y. (2001). The importance of noncognitive skills: Lessons from the GED testing program. *The American Economic Review* 91(2), 145–149. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.91.2.145>
- Hirano, M. (2010). A study of the classification of resilience factors: Development of the Bidimensional Resilience Scale (BRS). *Japanese Journal of Personality*, 19, 94–106. <https://doi.org/10.2132/personality.19.94>
- Hiver, P., & Sánchez Solarte, A. (2021). “Resilience” in T. Gregersen & S. Mercer (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of the psychology of language learning and teaching* (pp. 205–217). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429321498-19>
- Joyce, S., Shand, F., Tighe, J., Laurent, S. J., Bryant, R. A., & Harvey, S. B. (2018). Road to resilience: A systematic review and meta-analysis of resilience training programmes and interventions. *BMJ Open*, 8(6). <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2017-017858>
- Khine, M. S. (2016). Non-cognitive skills and factors in educational success and academic achievement. In M. S. Khine & S. Areepattamannil (Eds.), *Non-cognitive skills and factors in educational attainment* (pp. 3–9). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-591-3_1

- Kikuchi, K. (2006). Revisiting English entrance examinations at Japanese universities after a decade. *JALT Journal*, 28(1), 77–96. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJ28.1>
- Kikuchi, K. (2009). Listening to our learners' voices: what demotivates Japanese high school students? *Language Teaching Research*, 13(4), 453–471. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168809341520>
- Kikuchi, K. (2015). *Demotivation in second language acquisition: Insights from Japan*. Multilingual Matters.
- Kikuchi, K., & Lake, J. (2021). Positive psychology, positive L2 self, and L2 motivation: A longitudinal investigation. In K. Budzińska & O. Majchrzak (Eds.), *Positive psychology in second and foreign language education* (pp. 79–94). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64444-4_5
- Kikuchi, K., & Sakai, H. (2009). Japanese learners' demotivation to study English: A survey study. *JALT Journal*, 31(2), 183–204. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJ31.2>
- Lake, J. (2016). Accentuate the positive: Conceptual and empirical development of the positive L2 self and its relationship to proficiency. In P. D. MacIntyre, T. Gregersen, & S. Mercer (Eds.), *Positive psychology in SLA* (pp. 237–257). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.30945667.13>
- Lei, F., & Lei, L. (2022). How does the optimism of students learning a foreign language affect their creative self-efficacy? The mediating effects of hope and empathy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 831593. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.831593>
- Linley, A. (2008). *Average to A+: Realising strengths in yourself and others*. CAPP.
- Luthar, S. (2006). Resilience in development: A synthesis of research across five decades. In D. Chiccetti & D. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 739–795). John Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470939406.ch20>
- Martin, A., & Marsh, H. (2009). Academic resilience and academic buoyancy: Multidimensional and hierarchical conceptual framing of causes, correlates and cognate constructs, *Oxford Review of Education*, 35(3), 353–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980902934639>
- Martin, A. J. (2013). Academic buoyancy and academic resilience: Exploring 'everyday' and 'classic' resilience in the face of academic adversity. *School Psychology International*, 34(5), 488–500. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034312472759>
- Masten, A. (2009). Ordinary magic: Lessons from research on resilience in human development. *Education Canada*, 49(3), 28–33.

- Mikami, H. (2024). Revalidation of the L2-Grit scale: A conceptual replication of Teimouri, Y., Plonsky, L., & Tabandeh, F. (2022). L2 grit: Passion and perseverance for second-language learning. *Language Teaching*, 57(2), 274–289. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444822000544>
- Moriguchi, Y. (2019). 自分をコントロールする力: 非認知スキルの心理学 [The power of self-control: The psychology of non-cognitive skills]. Kodansha.
- Nakayama, Y. (2018). 学力テストで測れない非認知能力が子どもを伸ばす [Non-cognitive abilities that cannot be measured by academic tests help children grow]. Tokyo Shoseki.
- Namikawa, T., Tani, I., Wakita, T., Kumagai, R., Nakane, A., & Noguchi, H. (2012). Development of a short form of the Japanese big-five scale, and a test of its reliability and validity. *The Japanese Journal of Psychology*, 83(2), 91–99. <https://doi.org/10.4992/jjpsy.83.91>
- Oshio, S. (Ed.). (2021). 非認知能力: 概念・測定と教育の可能性 [Noncognitive abilities: Concepts, measurement and educational possibilities]. Kitaouji Shobou.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook of classification*. Oxford University Press.
- Sakai, H., & Kikuchi, K. (2009). An analysis of demotivators in the EFL classroom. *System*, 37, 57–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2008.09.005>
- Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (1994). Distinguishing optimism from neuroticism (and trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem): A reevaluation of the Life Orientation Test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 1063–1078. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.6.1063>
- Schmidt, R., Boraie, D., & Kassabgy, O. (1996). Foreign language motivation: Internal structure and external connections. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning motivation: Pathways to the new century* (pp. 9–70). National Foreign Language Resource Center.
- Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.5>
- Sudina, E., Brown, J., Datzman, B., Oki, Y., Song, K., Cavanaugh, R., Thiruchelvam, B., & Plonsky, L. (2021). Language-specific grit: Exploring psychometric properties, predictive validity, and differences across contexts. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 15(4), 334–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2020.1802468>

- Takehashi H., Higuchi O., Ozaki Y., Watanabe T., & Toyosawa J. (2019). Reliability and validity of the Japanese version of the Grit Scale. *Japanese Journal of Psychology*, 89(5), 580–590. <https://doi.org/10.4992/jjpsy.89.17220>
- Taguchi, T., Magid, M., & Papi, M. (2009). The L2 motivational self-system amongst Chinese, Japanese, and Iranian learners of English: A comparative study. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 66–97). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.30945943.7>
- Teimouri, Y. (2018). Differential roles of shame and guilt in L2 learning: How bad is bad? *The Modern Language Journal*, 102(4), 632–652. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12511>
- Teimouri, Y., Plonsky, L., & Tabandeh, F. (2022). L2 grit: Passion and perseverance for second-language learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 26(5), 893–918. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820921895>
- Toyama, M. (2013). Development of the Japanese optimism and pessimism scale: Reliability and validity. *Japanese Journal of Psychology*, 84, 256–266. <https://doi.org/10.4992/jjpsy.84.256>
- Toyama, M. (2022). 楽観性 [Optimism] in S. Oshio (Ed.), 非認知能力: 概念・測定と教育の可能性 [Noncognitive abilities: Concepts, measurement and educational possibilities] (pp. 101–114). Kitaouji Shobou.
- Ueno, Y., Hirano, M., & Oshio, A. (2020). The development of resilience in Japanese adults: A two-wave latent change model. *Health Psychology Open*, 7(1), 2055102920904726. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2055102920904726>
- Ueno, Y., Hirano, M., & Oshio, A. (2021). Resilience and socio-demographic characteristics: Results from a large cross-sectional study in Japan. *Asian Pacific Journal of Disease Management*, 10, 25–31. <https://doi.org/10.7223/apjdm.10.25>
- Wright, M. O., Masten, A. S., & Narayan, A. J. (2013). Resilience processes in development: Four waves of research on positive adaptation in the context of adversity. In S. Goldstein & R. B. Brooks (Eds.), *Handbook of resilience in children* (2nd ed., pp. 15–37). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-3661-4_2
- Yashima, T. (2002). Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86, 54–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4781.00136>

Reviews

***Dominant Language Constellations: A New Perspective on Multilingualism.* Joseph Lo Bianco and Larissa Aronin (Eds). Springer Nature, 2020. xix + 282 pp. ¥12,154.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52336-7>**

Reviewed by

Harsha Dulari Wijesekera

Sri Lankan Institute of Information Technology

Dominant Language Constellations: A New Perspective on Multilingualism (Volume 47 of Educational Linguistics series), edited by Joseph Lo Bianco and Larissa Aronin, offers an innovative conceptual shift in how multilingualism is studied and understood. Positioned at the intersection of applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and language policy, this edited volume introduces the Dominant Language Constellations (DLCs) framework as a novel lens to scrutinise how individuals and societies manage multiple languages in increasingly complex linguistic milieus. The volume is timely in essentially rethinking and reimagining the notions of linguistic dominance and suppression, given the fluidity of language practices in today's superdiverse world.

The targeted audience is scholars, graduate students, language educators, and policymakers interested in multilingualism, language planning, and education. The book's theoretical richness and practical significance make it a valuable source for researchers and practitioners navigating linguistically diverse classrooms, institutions and other contexts. Contesting the traditional static models of multilingualism, the volume's novel conceptual framework—DLC—offers a flexible and context-sensitive framework, enabling more accurate reflections/analysis of the lived linguistic experiences of individuals and communities. The volume, by combining theoretical grounding in empirical studies in each chapter,

makes the theoretically loaded DCL framework easily understandable and usable. The DLC framework claims that multilingualism be considered not as an undistinguishable set of linguistic resources (as translanguaging theoretical underpinnings see) but as a constellation of languages within which dominance of languages and their usage shift, shaped by contextual linguistic circumstances. Unlike linguistic resources of multilinguals as a unified system as translanguaging postulates, DLC is underpinned by how certain languages emerge as more expedient or dominant in specific contexts but not in others due to sociopolitical, economic, cultural, or communicative factors, as the volume illustrates with empirical studies.

Framed by a convincing introduction and a forward-looking concluding chapter, the volume is well-structured into three main parts. Part I—"Current Development of DLC," comprises five chapters and mainly lays the theoretical groundwork. Grounded in Complexity Theory, Aronin's opening chapter positions DLC as an analytical approach, emphasising the contextuality and adaptability of multilingual practices. Lo Bianco then connects DLC with language policy and political oversight, taking Vietnam as his "case." He argues for ethically grounded policies aligning with actual linguistic realities. Adding a cognitive dimension to the volume, next, Fernández-Berkes and Flynn investigate multilingual learners' use of dominant languages during their simultaneous multilingual language acquisition, focusing on learners' syntactic development. Felix Banda's African case study outlines the sociopolitical layers of DLCs in Zambia's multilingual landscape, reinforcing the dynamic, multi-layered nature of language dominance resulting from years of trans-regional, transnational migration, and interethnic contact.

Part II, "Institutional Expression of DLC," presents empirical cases from educational contexts. In the first chapter of this part, Björklund et al. discover societal and individual DLCs in Finland. They focus on language immersion and policy tensions. In the succeeding chapter, Nikolay Slavkov presents language background profiling in elementary schools in Canada. This is another chapter that displays DLC's relevance in language planning for multilingual classrooms. In the last chapter of Part II, Coetzee-Van Rooy investigates multilingual South African students' repertoires and shows a clear complementary relationship between language repertoire and DLC.

Part III, "Personal and Group Experiences with DLC," delves into micro-level realities. Sarari Kannangara analyses how her unique personal DLCs evolve through language use on a par with personal, societal, and geographical shifts, highlighting emotional and strategic decision-making in

language choice. In the succeeding chapter, Sviatlana Karpava investigates Russian speakers in Cyprus, examining how intergenerational language maintenance intersects with societal integration. Next, Stella Krevelj studies crosslinguistic influence in multilinguals through DLC and confirms DLC as a productive lens for analysing transfer in multilingual speech. Adding an affective dimension, Richard Nightingale explores emotional attachment to languages through a case study in Spain, in the following chapter. He suggests that DLC configuration seems dynamic and constantly in flux as conditions evolve in multilingual contexts.

The final chapter by Lo Bianco, “Quo Vadis, DLC?” (From here, where are we going?), reviews key insights from the preceding chapters. He raises critical questions about the future of language policy, linguistic diversity and justice, and the survival of less powerful/minority languages in the face of neo-globalisation and technological progression. He emphasises the role of DLCs in addressing global and local language dynamics while underscoring the role of education and media in shaping attitudes towards practical language use and linguistic hierarchies.

As evident above, the DLC framework is theorised and empirically applied across geographical, institutional, and individual contexts, enhancing its versatility and relevance throughout the volume. One of the most commendable aspects of this book is its innovative, ground-breaking theoretical framing—DLC. It transcends traditional dichotomies such as native vs. non-native language or L1 vs. L2 and recent theoretical concepts such as translanguaging by situating languages and language use in a dynamic constellation that varies across time, space, and purpose. Aronin’s theoretical articulation of DLC as “the most expedient languages for a person” (p. 19), rooted in context-sensitive analysis effectively addresses real-life complexities in multilingual milieus. Another strength is the volume’s interdisciplinary scope. While the overarching framework is sociolinguistic, the chapters draw from cognitive linguistics (such as syntax development), educational policy, affective studies, and migration research, making the book accessible to readers from several academic/professional backgrounds. Moreover, the intermingling of qualitative and quantitative methodologies across chapters adds a robust and nuanced understanding of the DLC framework’s applicability.

The writing style across the volume is academic but lucid. Most chapters are easily comprehensible for graduate-level students and early-career researchers. However, certain theoretical sections that engage heavily with theory (e.g., Complexity Theory) might be challenging to readers new to

sociolinguistics. Aside from this, the introductory chapter does an excellent job of scaffolding key concepts, and the Foreword by Li Wei provides a concise but powerful contextualisation of the book's contribution to the field. Another noteworthy strength is the global coverage, from Africa and Europe to North America and South Asia, grounding the theoretical insights in lived linguistic realities. The African and Cypriot chapters are particularly effective in illustrating how DLCs operate in multilingual but power-stratified, multi-tiered multilingual environments. The chapters that present cases from Canada and Finland also offer lessons for educational policy, linguistic inclusion, and equity.

There are a few areas that could have been reinforced in the volume. First, the emphasis on fluidity is much foregrounded and this occasionally tends to downplay the structural inequalities that shape language use, though the contributors have explicitly acknowledged linguistic hierarchies. In many multilingual societies, specific languages are afforded higher status and prestige, influencing individuals to make conscious linguistic choices and position such languages within a DLC. For instance, the English language in postcolonial settings perpetuates dominance. These power dynamics are durable, yet fluctuate, intersecting with sociopolitical, cultural, etc., circumstances. Hence, a much deeper engagement with critical theories of language and colonialism would have enriched the analysis. Another limitation is the predominance of qualitative data. Undeniably, the depth and contextual richness of the qualitative case studies are rich and nuanced. Hitherto, integrating large-scale quantitative findings could have strengthened the volume. However, the authors take more or less a qualitative orientation to cater to their aim, i.e., to capture a panoramic view of deep complexities in individual and societal multilingual practices. Such practices are not easily reducible to numerical trends.

Irrespective of these negligible issues, the volume is a notable contribution to sociolinguistics, particularly the multilingualism research arena. The volume succeeds in its primary objective: introducing and operationalising a novel framework for understanding complex and dynamic multilingualism in the century where linguistic boundaries are increasingly fluid and permeable. The DLC model will have far-reaching implications for educational research, curriculum design, teacher training, and language policy. In this regard, the volume offers a diagnostic and strategic tool for policymakers and grassroots practitioners aiming to create linguistically inclusive and just landscapes.

Dominant Language Constellations: A New Perspective on Multilingualism is a stimulating and timely addition to contemporary multilingualism studies. It offers a new conceptual vocabulary and an empirically grounded framework that better mirrors how individuals use and experience multiple languages in navigating today's globalised contexts. The model challenges monolingual paradigms and presents a practical and theoretically sound dynamic view of multilingualism.

The volume's breadth spans from syntax acquisition to language policy and emotional dimensions, ensuring a diverse readership across academia and practice. It is highly recommended for applied linguists, language teachers, educational policymakers, and undergraduate/graduate students navigating multilingual realities in classrooms, institutions, individuals, communities, and research. Those interested in translanguaging, linguistic justice/democracy, or language planning and policy will find the DLC framework a novel and stimulating alternative that complements and extends current debates of multilingualism. By combining critical insight, empirical grounding, and theoretical innovation, the book opens new directions for research and pedagogy in multilingualism. "With its emphasis on the dynamic and ever-changing nature of multilingualism and the need to embed our analysis and understanding in historical and ideological contexts, DLC makes an original and productive contribution to scholarship and knowledge" (p. ix) as the eminent sociolinguist Li Wei (2020) suggested in her foreword to the volume.

References

- Lo Bianco, J., & Aronin, L. (Eds). (2020). *Dominant language constellations: A new perspective on multilingualism*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52336-7>
- Wei, L. (2020). Foreword: Multilingualism and dominant language constellation. In J. Lo Bianco & L. Aronin (Eds.), *Dominant language constellations: A new perspective on multilingualism* (pp. ix–xi). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52336-7>

***Plurilingual Education in a Monolingualised Nation: Exploring New Frontiers in Language Teaching in Japan.* Daniel Ray Pearce. Multilingual Matters, 2025. xii + 230 pp.
<https://doi.org/10.21832/PEARCE7694>**

Reviewed by

Thomas Amundrud

Nara University of Education

In this monograph, Daniel Ray Pearce provides a detailed account of plurilingual practices in the “ostensibly monolingual contexts” (p. 3) of Japanese elementary schools. Plurilingualism is defined as a complex composite of competencies in languages in which speakers have varying degrees of communicative proficiency (Coste et al., 2009), but has been seen as a “minority issue” (p. 2) in Japan, where the “double monolingualism/二重のモノリンガリズム” (Miura, 2000, p. 9) of Japanese as the language of domestic communication and English as the sole foreign language for schooling and international communication has dominated post-World War II.

Part One provides the academic background for Pearce’s study into plurilingualism and Pearce’s autoethnographic situation. Part Two examines the plurilingual approaches of Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) in primary schools. Part Three looks at the previously ignored plurilingual potential of the elementary school Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), which are now present throughout Japan and are still treated as “native English speakers” by policy despite present realities. It closes with a discussion of the preceding chapters that presents suggestions for teacher training.

Chapter 1 begins with a history of language teaching in Japan. Of particular note is its discussion of how the dominance of *yakudoku*, or translation reading, remained unquestioned until the 1970s, relating this to the rise of cognitive-linguistic theories which postulated native speaker status as the ultimate goal of language acquisition. Citing May (2014), Pearce describes this as the origin of the “monolingual bias,” or “language-as-model,” that sees bi/multilingualism as an “aberration” from an idealized native speaker norm. This norm was embodied by the communicative turn in national education policy and subsequent introduction of ALTs from the 1980s. Pearce then contrasts these “language-as-model” approaches with the subsequent development of sociocultural approaches, dubbed “user-as-

model,” which were critical of prior native speaker idealizations (e.g. Firth & Wagner, 1997) and valorized instead how bi/multilinguals actually develop and use their named languages in practice, for instance as shown by François Grosjean (e.g., 2010).

Chapter 2 describes the emic method of multimodal polyethnography (Olt & Teman, 2019) used in this study, which focuses on individuals’ plurilingual experience, and profiles the main participants. Of note is its methodological presentation of both participants’ and the author’s *currere*, in which “each person’s current skills, abilities and beliefs are a result of a life history which has served as a form of ‘curriculum’ during their development” (Lawrence & Lowe, 2020, p. 9). Through incorporating visual linguistic biography (e.g. Melo-Pfeifer & Chik, 2020), Pearce includes visual data beyond written or spoken language to extend what is expressible.

Chapter 3 relates the study to the author’s visual linguistic autobiography. Pearce relates in words and images his childhood struggles with belonging, finding himself on the autistic spectrum, and discovering Japanese and linguistics in university as together creating the foundation for his adult plurilingual success. Pearce has defined his teaching career in Japan outside of the double monolingualisms of both Japanese and English language native speakerism, and how as a licensed secondary school teacher who earned his graduate degrees in Japan and is now a teacher trainer, he has worked to develop plurilingual pedagogy.

Chapter 4 profiles the plurilingual pedagogic practices of two elementary school JTEs that embody an Awakening to Languages approach (see Oyama and Pearce, 2019). Yuki-sensei became an elementary school English teacher when foreign languages activities (外国語活動) were added to the official curriculum from 2011, while Kana-sensei is a self-identified “monolingual” Japanese elementary *Kokugo* (国語: subject Japanese) teacher who started teaching foreign language activities classes when they were implemented at her school. Yuki-sensei’s vignettes in Chapter 4 illustrate her appreciation for multitudinous cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Chapter 5 shows how Yuki-sensei enacts plurilingualism in her classroom so that foreign languages are personally relevant for students, for instance demonstrating to her third-year elementary students, who are concurrently learning *romaji* in their *Kokugo* classes and Roman characters in their English classes, how *romaji* and English are different and why that might be using signs from the students’ local linguistic environment. Chapter 6 profiles Kana-sensei and her school’s *Gengo Bunka* (language and culture) curriculum. Kana-sensei’s vignettes show how she became a

critically engaged educator who had initially resisted the introduction of foreign languages into elementary schools. Chapter 7 profiles the intersection of the *Gengo Bunka* curriculum with peace education in Kana-sensei's school, such as having students examine a 10-rupee banknote from India, and hypothesize why there were so many languages, as well as which were most prominent. Both Yuki-sensei and Kana-sensei's classrooms feature activities that foster a multisensory sensitivity towards the phonemic differences between languages.

Part 3 begins with Chapter 8, which outlines the history of the JET/ALT system, and reports on a demographic survey of 181 ALT participants' plurilinguistic repertoires (p. 153), following Pearce (2021), that alone is a necessary reference. It also shows ALTs and JTEs collaboratively working to introduce plurilingual content within and beyond the textbook despite the constraints of insufficient teacher training, overly superficial materials, and unstable ALT employment. In Chapter 9, Pearce examines the "individual plurilingualism" of Japanese teachers and their ALT teaching partners. He suggests using visual linguistic biographies to enable ALTs to quickly present their plurilingualism to busy JTE partners so they can properly use ALTs' plurilingual capacities. Pearce then conducted a linguistic ethnography with his fourth-year student, Airi-sensei, first hearing her impressions of ALTs both as a student and a future teacher. Her visual linguistic ethnography was then sent to a former ALT, Nick-sensei, who shared his own. Through their online collaborative exploration of each other's linguistic backgrounds, Airi-sensei, as a future teacher, became more aware of ALTs' potential plurilinguistic abilities.

In the conclusion, Pearce reminds us that the plurilingualism presented by Yuki-sensei and Kana-sensei is a counter-discourse to the dominant double monolingualism he asserts results from following official Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) policy that officially promotes an English-exclusive environment from upper elementary school. While this counter-discourse opposes macro-level policy, it is in cooperation with meso-level school policy. Finally, while acknowledging that there is justification for giving English priority in Japanese foreign language education, Pearce asserts that since the majority of English speakers in the world are not native speakers themselves, a plurilingual approach is more relevant for awakening students to different ways of knowing the world.

This volume has three strengths. The most prominent to this reader is in its methodological richness. A plus of Pearce's plurilingual approach

is that he actively brings readers into dialogue with literature across languages and thus embodies in his scholarship the practice he advocates. Additionally, readers familiar with duoethnography, which has previously gained some popularity in language teaching research, may find Pearce's polyethnography an intriguing innovation. His practice of visual linguistic biography as a research method should inspire more readers to consider extra-linguistic modes in their ethnographic research, though I believe the specific methods do require refinement as will be discussed. Finally, as a practical introduction to plurilingualism in classroom practice in Japan, Yuki-sensei's vignette, and the presentation of the hidden plurilingualism of ALTs and discussion of its potential despite official sanction, is particularly welcome.

On a critical note, however, the following points stand out. First, this volume may have been better entitled "plurilingualism in Japanese elementary school education". Although both of Pearce's in-service teacher participants are in elementary schools, this is not clearly stated from the beginning. While the classroom examples given do show the potential of the *Awakening to Languages* approach specifically at an introductory level, which is where it has been primarily located (Candelier et al., 2012), the reader can only guess how it might work at other levels. Additionally, Candelier (2003 in Candelier et al., 2012, p. 7) states that *Awakening to Languages* is best suited when "some of the learning activities are concerned with languages which the school generally does not intend to teach." While this may describe other languages that students in a plurilingually-positive primary school classroom might be exposed to, it does not describe English, which remains the primary foreign language taught in Japanese secondary schools. Therefore, how such classes might treat what will be the target language in children's future schooling relative to other languages in which they are less likely to receive instructed exposure remains a necessary distinction.

A further criticism is regarding the place of English in elementary schools overall. Since Pearce acknowledges elsewhere that "sufficient financial and human resources have not been invested" in preparing and implementing English in Japanese elementary schools, and that these teachers felt hesitant and unprepared to teach it (Oyama & Pearce, 2019, p. 71), some readers may think that Pearce is in essence making a virtue out of MEXT's vice of over-mandating and under-resourcing performance in the establishment of elementary school English by holding up Kana-sensei as a model. While it is certainly laudable that she, who had rejected

elementary school foreign language education outright, came to see it as compatible with her school's peace education focus, one still wonders what might have been had greater investment in planning curriculum and training teachers for elementary school English been made. That said, such an argument might miss the positive basis for language development that Awakening to Languages can engender, and the examples shown in this volume demonstrate the potential of this approach to develop learners' investigative skills. But whether this approach facilitates later competence in English or any target language is not answered here, though some research suggests the potential of Awakening to Languages to foster subsequent language development (e.g. Ben Maad, 2022; Lourenço & Andrade, 2014), the inclusion of which would have strengthened Pearce's argument.

Finally, while the visual methods used in this volume are rich and intriguing, they lack any metalanguage for describing how they *mean* to begin with. It might benefit those utilizing visual linguistic biographies to refer to the considerable work since the 1990s in multimodal image analysis, most notably Kress and van Leeuwen (e.g., 2021). This would give them the explanatory power to analyze the meanings created, with sufficient theoretical validity and transportability across contexts. In closing, for all readers concerned with instructed language education in Japan, *Plurilingual Education in a Monolingualised Nation* is a thought-provoking monograph examining counter-discursive practices that have the potential to positively influence the future of language teaching here. However, it may require a bit of its own counter reading to make productive.

References

- Ben Maad, M. R. (2022). Early-year awakening to languages: A spotlight on motivation. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, 13(1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJLC.2021.111661>
- Candelier, M., de Pietro, J., Facciolo, R., Lorincz, I., Pascual, X., & Schroder-Sura, A. (2012). *FREPA - A framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures: Competences and resources*. Council of Europe. <https://www.ecml.at/portals/1/documents/ecml-resources/carap-en.pdf>
- Coste, D., Moore, D., & Zarate, G. (2009). *Plurilingual and pluricultural competence*. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/168069d29b>
- Firth, A., & Wagner, J. (1997). On discourse, communication, and (some) fundamental concepts in SLA research. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81(3), 285–300. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1997.tb05480.x>

- Grosjean, F. (2010). *Bilingual: Life and reality*. Harvard. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674056459>
- Lawrence, L., & Lowe, R. J. (2020). An introduction to duoethnography. In R. J. Lowe & L. Lawrence (Eds.), *Duoethnography in English language teaching: Research, reflection and classroom application* (pp. 1–26). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.22730666.5>
- Lourenço, M., & Andrade, A. I. (2014). Promoting phonological awareness in pre-primary education: Possibilities of the 'awakening to languages' approach. *Language Awareness*, 23(4), 304–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2013.783585>
- Olt, P. A. & Teman, E.D. (2019). Un[bracketed]: Phenomenological polyethnography. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 19(2), 146–155. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-12-2018-0001>
- May, S. (2014). Disciplinary divides, knowledge construction, and the multilingual turn. In S. May (Ed.), *The multilingual turn: Implications for SLA, TESOL and bilingual education* (pp. 7–31). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203113493>
- Melo-Pfeifer, S., & Chik, A. (2020). Multimodal linguistic biographies of prospective foreign language teachers in Germany: reconstructing beliefs about languages and multilingual language learning in initial teacher education. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 19(4), 499–522. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2020.1753748>
- Miura, N. (2000). 植民地時代とポスト植民地時代の言話支配 [Colonial and postcolonial linguistic domination]. In N. Miura & K. Kasuya (Eds.), 言語帝国主義とは何か [What is linguistic imperialism?] (pp. 6–24). Fujiwara Shoten.
- Oyama, M., & Pearce, D. R. (2019). Promoting bilingualism in Japanese elementary schools: Exploring the possibilities of the Awakening to Languages approach. *Japan Journal of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism*, 25(1), 65–86.
- Pearce, D. R. (2021). Homogenous representations, diverse realities: Assistant language teachers at elementary schools. *The Language Teacher*, 45(3), 3–11. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT45.3-1>

***Promoting Reflection on Language Learning: Lessons from a University Setting.* Neil Curry, Phoebe Lyon and Jo Mynard (Eds.). Multilingual Matters, 2023, xiii + 362 pp.**

<https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800415591>

Reviewed by

Mizuka Tsukamoto

Ryukoku University

A unique aspect of *Promoting Reflection on Language Learning* is its unified context: all contributions stem from research and practice at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) in Japan. The 26 contributors to the book comprise current or former instructors at KUIS and learning advisors at the university's Self-Access Learning Centre. As Hayo Reinders notes in the *Foreword*, this allows the authors to “paint a truly detailed and fascinating picture of reflection as it is ‘lived’ in practice at all its levels” (p. xiii).

The book is organised into 23 chapters that fall under three main divisions: Part 1: Setting the scene; Part 2: Theoretical constructs; Part 3: Insights from Initial Studies; Part 4: Intervention Studies; Part 5: Reflection and Technology; Part 6: Tools and Activities for Promoting Reflection in Practice; Part 7: Retrospective Reflections; and Part 8: conclusions. In addition to these eight parts, the preliminary pages and the introduction provide guidance to the reader by outlining the book's theoretical approaches, aims, research questions, and methodologies by reviewing the current literature. As the editors mention, each chapter reads as if it could stand on its own. This allows readers to choose and read what they might be most interested in or best fits their context after either looking at the Table of Contents or Chapter 1.

In Part I (Chapter 1), the editors remind readers of the importance of reflection in the language learning process and present the goal of the book by presenting four questions they aim to respond to: What is reflection on language learning? Why is it important? How can it be promoted inside and outside the classroom? How do we know if the process is working? (p. 3). They call out the programme administrators on how much change reflections could bring about when incorporated at an institutional level (p. 5). However, this also reminds readers that the setting of this book is very unique in the number of resources that this one institution has devoted

to it, and most practitioners may not be in similar situations. Chapter 2 introduces the organisation of the book, along with the short summaries of each chapter. It starts with a brief review of reflection on learning, providing the modern definition, and what past research has been conducted. This section also outlines the methodological approaches adopted by the authors. This is followed by an explanation of the educational setting in which the research projects were conducted.

The two chapters in Part 2 (Chapters 3 & 4) set the theoretical constructs of the book. Mynard begins Chapter 3 by providing Moon's (2005) definition of reflection and then provides a working definition for the volume; "reflection is the intentional examination of experiences, thoughts, and actions in order to learn about oneself and inform change or personal growth." (pp. 23-24) This is accompanied by a helpful Table (3.1), that summarises the common reflective models (p. 28). Among these models, Mynard provides an overview of the key models of reflections that are specifically applied to language learning (i.e. Schön, 1983; Kolb, 1984; Gibb, 1988). She refers to the difficulty of research on reflection as it concerns the "development of mental process which are only generally observable to researchers with specialised equipment and training in neuroscience." (p. 32) She also looks at how past research has attempted to measure the effect of reflections, such as Prince (2004) who looked into ways of researching how reflection affects academic achievement, and Lew and Schmidt (2011) which examined whether learners writing reflection journals made them better at self-reflections. In Chapter 4, Kato distinguishes two kinds of dialogue: dialogue in which the speaker conveys their message to the listener, and dialogue in which participants are guided into a more intense learning experience. The dialogue she discusses constitutes a part of reflection and emphasises that a reflective dialogue is different from other forms of reflection in that it is done through communication and that it allows switching viewpoints on one's perception of how things are done (p. 39).

Part 3 (Chapters 5-7) outlines the studies conducted at KUIS that build on the theoretical foundations described in Part 2, and how reflection is explored in the institution. Chapters 5 and 6 provide details of the initial action research projects that started in 2018. These concerned reflective activities that enable students to reflect more deeply and develop it (Chapter 5), looking into the reflective activities (Chapter 5), a rubric that analyses language learner reflections (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 discusses the need to train students to reflect effectively. The editors note that the results of these studies led them to develop the subsequent studies described in Part 4.

Part 4 (Chapters 9-12) presents a series of intervention studies. These chapters consider how reflection activities can be applied in practice. The authors discuss what successes they had in raising students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in reflection (Chapters 9, 11). Part 5 (Chapters 13-16) discusses the use of technology in the classroom. Chapter 13 focuses on the use of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), while Chapter 14 examines the use of digital games to study language, which was not focussed reflective practice. Chapter 15 looks at the use of an online platform "Seesaw" and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are discussed in Chapter 16.

In Part 6 (Chapters 17-19), specific tools for promoting reflection are introduced, and the chapters share actual examples of written feedback given from the advisors to the students on their submissions. Chapter 18, helpfully present examples of activities that train reflective writing skills and share three characteristics they identified that are necessary to foster autonomy and competence in reflection: "revisiting with intention; systematic, recursive skill development; and relevance to self" (p. 285).

The chapters in Part 7 (Chapters 20-22) are anecdotal in a sharing their authors' reflections on critical incidents that made them realise the importance and need for training in reflective practices. These chapters remind us that practitioners, not just learners, benefit from reflections and training for reflective practices. The final part of the book summarises the volume and leaves the readers with suggestions for further research, such as looking into the support that teachers might need to allow them to promote reflective activities in the curriculum (p. 355).

The editors describe the book as intended for practising educators and early-career researchers (p. 5), but its viable audience is wider. The book is accessible to researchers and practitioners at all levels, who may be interested in incorporating reflections into their classrooms, whether at the tertiary, secondary, or even middle-school levels. The clear presentation of the setting, participants and methodology should allow adaptation of findings to all different levels and the suggestions for further research and literature recommendations make the book widely useful as a resource for all types of teaching.

The aims of the book, introduced in Chapter 1, are to "provide insights into research and practices for promoting learner reflection." (p.5). The book successfully responds to the first aim—"What is reflection on language learning?"—by providing a brief history of reflection and models in Chapter 2. In fact, it was unclear to me whether all chapter authors shared

the same understanding of the definition of reflection presented by Mynard in Chapter 2, or how that was conveyed to the authors. Considering the second aim—"Why is it important?"—the book discusses the importance of reflection in terms of empirical observation (i.e. students learning as indicated in the chapters and instructors experience described in chapters 20, 21 & 22) and theoretical and practice.

Regarding the third aim—How can reflection be promoted inside and outside the classroom?—the book contained a lot of discussion on the reflective activities inside the classroom, but not so much for outside the classroom. Yet, reflection outside the classroom seem to be imperative to answer the fourth aim,—How do we know if the process is working?—there is discussion of the true test of engagement. Some chapters described the success of increasing the students' awareness through reflections; however, the time to measure such success was very limited to during the semester, the academic year, or while the students were enrolled in the programme. There is a question of what it really means for a process to work. It could mean for the students to engage in reflective practices outside the institutional setting, and possibly carry on beyond university. Future research could look into whether the programme has shaped the habits and skills so the students continue with the practices by themselves, for example those who have enrolled in graduate programmes.

A further point which may have been useful to elucidate is when the various practices and studies discussed in the book took place. Apart from identifying the initial studies from 2018, and some indication that some data were collected during the COVID-19 outbreak (p. 350), it is unclear when the practices and the study described in the book took place. Some chapters have discussed the success of using technology, namely the use of certain software, in reflective activities. Not all programmes or instructors are able to purchase the software for classroom use, and they get outdated quickly. How the practices could be adapted more generally would have been helpful. In addition, the book was published in 2023. Much software is now, and more will likely be AI-assisted. The chapters were published before this new technology, therefore, the chapters discussing the technologies may have to be updated soon. The questions faced by researchers are: to what extent, how, and whether AI should be incorporated into reflection in learning?

I particularly found Chapter 12 to be interesting in the way the authors explored the effectiveness of reflections on fluency in writing classes. In my own practice, I have incorporated reflections in discussion and presenta-

tion classes, as well as extensive reading, project-based or content-based classes, but had not considered doing so in writing classes. The authors write, “We were unaware of any studies addressing reflection on writing fluency and wanted to provide second language learners with a method of developing their language learning through reflection on writing.” (p. 167) This chapter, I believe, helps to fulfil this aim and support the proposition that student reflections can be incorporated into various kinds of language classes.

This demonstrates that reflection can be successfully used in more uncommon classroom settings highlights that the instituted environment seems in play at KUIS where coordinated practice enables reflections to be used in various settings. This success aside, however, readers may have found it more useful if a more common classroom settings were included, such as student reflections in an intensive reading classroom, and presentation classrooms. This may have enabled readers to compare what they already do with their own students as well as seek ways to improve their current approaches. To give personal and specific examples, two project-based courses that I taught both required students to reflect on their contribution either during or after the process of the project (See Tsukamoto, 2022; Tsukamoto, 2024 for details.) Assuming that project-based courses or an equivalent took place at KUIS, if there had been a chapter in the volume that looked into the reflection in a project-based course, it would have been quite interesting for me to see what kind of tools might have been used and how reflections were incorporated into the courses.

That said, the book’s wide and cross-referencing discussion of practices is broadly useful, and readers will find much of interest in the chapters, both theoretically and practically. Readers who are in search of specific ways to incorporate reflections in their own classrooms or looking for research on reflections using a specific research method might find it useful to look at the Appendix in Chapter 23 first as the table provides a summary of the tools and research methods and tools used in the chapters.

References

- Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.

- Lew, M. D., & Schmidt, H. G. (2011). Self-reflection and academic performance: Is there a relationship? *Advances Health Science Education*, 16(4), 529–545. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10459-011-9298-z>
- Moon, J. (2005). *Guide for busy academics No. 4: Learning through reflection*. The University of Exeter.
- Prince, M. (2004). Does active learning work? A review of the research. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93(3), 223–231. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2004.tb00809.x>
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.
- Tsukamoto, M. (2022). Some thoughts on implementing a new teaching approach: A review of Clarke's "Exploring autonomous learning..." *The Learner Development Journal*, 6, 114–120. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTSIG.LDJ6-8>
- Tsukamoto, M. (2024). Exploring student engagement in an online environment. *The Pan SIG Journal*, 2023, 182–188.

The Twenty Most Effective Language Teaching Techniques.

I. S. P. Nation. Routledge, 2025. x + 323 pp.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003496151>

Reviewed by
J. Paul Marlowe
Kindai University

Any experienced language teacher has likely developed a personal toolkit of go-to classroom techniques: tried-and-true practices shaped by reflection, student needs, institutional demands, and contextual realities. While such choices are valid and often effective, teachers seeking to ground their methods in pedagogical theory and empirical evidence will find immense value in I.S.P. Nation's *The Twenty Most Effective Language Teaching Techniques*. Despite its title, the book does not present a ranked list of "top" strategies. Instead, Nation offers detailed explanations and classroom-ready guidance for twenty techniques, organized by skill domain and underpinned by foundational pedagogical frameworks and principles. This practical, research-informed resource invites educators to evaluate, refine, and expand their instructional repertoire.

The book opens with an introduction and four foundational chapters that establish the pedagogical lens through which each technique is later explored. Nation avoids a rigid definition of *technique*, using the term loosely alongside *activities* and *tasks*. He then outlines his Four Strands framework: meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development, which serves as both a theoretical anchor and practical categorization tool. The section concludes with a discussion of the eight principles of learning: motivation, self-efficacy, focus, accuracy, repetition, time-on-task, elaboration, analysis, that Nation argues are essential to the effectiveness of any technique. Although readers may choose to skip directly to the techniques, these initial chapters offer critical scaffolding that informs the rationale, categorization, and classroom application of each technique. For readers already familiar with Nation's pedagogical theories, it is easy to use the table of contents to navigate to a specific skill area or technique. Each chapter is relatively short and includes a unique DOI, underscoring the book's modular design and inviting scholarly engagement by making individual techniques easily citable for research or teacher training contexts.

The remainder of the book is organized primarily by language skill: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, with two additional sections devoted to general-purpose techniques and suggestions for further research. Each chapter follows a consistent and accessible format, addressing key questions: What is the technique? What are the learning goals? How does it help learning? How can it be implemented effectively? What digital applications exist? How does it connect to other classroom tasks? And what does the research say regarding the effectiveness of the technique? In responding to these questions, Nation provides clear explanations, step-by-step implementation guidance, and concrete examples, including sample worksheets and classroom-ready activities. While the book is rich in practical tasks, it is not simply a grab-bag activity handbook. Rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions, Nation frames each technique as an adaptable model, encouraging teachers to tailor tasks based on learners' levels, goals, and contexts. Each chapter concludes with research questions linked to the eight learning principles, making the book as valuable for teacher practitioners as for researchers seeking to extend the line of inquiry into the investigation of the pedagogical effectiveness of these techniques.

Nation's writing is both accessible yet academically grounded, making the book suitable for a wide range of readers: from novice instructors to experienced teacher educators and researchers. The prose is deliberately

non-technical, with theoretical terms introduced only when necessary and often accompanied by clear explanations and examples. Visual aids such as tables and figures are frequently employed throughout the text to illustrate both pedagogical principles and classroom tasks, enhancing clarity and utility. This style reflects the book's dual aim: to provide immediate classroom applications while promoting reflective, research-informed practice. One of the book's most notable strengths is its balance of empirical support and practical relevance. Nation draws on both seminal and contemporary research in second language acquisition, as well as foundational studies in general education, to justify the inclusion of each technique. Importantly, these references are woven seamlessly into the text, allowing readers to understand the research context without being burdened by dense literature reviews. As Nation puts it, "research provides the guidelines, experience and experimentation equally inform" (p. 38): a philosophy evident throughout the book. For those wishing to delve deeper, each chapter's DOI and citation trail offer a direct link to the broader scholarly conversation.

Another fitting title for this might be *Paul Nation's Greatest Hits*. Readers familiar with his earlier work will recognize many of the techniques he has long advocated. Across the twenty techniques, Nation presents a well-balanced mix of time-tested practices and more recent innovations. Some are undisputed staples of language teaching: vocabulary flashcards, dictation, substitution tables, and the 4/3/2 fluency activity, while others reflect newer trends, such as extensive reading and listening, 10-minute writing, and problem-solving speaking tasks.

Among the classics, dictation: described by Nation as "a listening-based form of intensive reading," receives the most extensive treatment. This is due in part to the many variations he includes, such as running dictation, guided dictation, peer dictation, and hybrid forms like delayed copying and dicto-comp. Each is clearly explained and easily adaptable, making the chapter one of the most immediately usable in the book. Despite its longevity in the classroom, Nation points out that "there is no direct research focusing on dictation as a language learning technique" (p. 85), noting instead that research exists on its foundational components: memory span, repetition, and corrective feedback. These frequent invitations to future research are one of the book's quiet strengths. Extensive reading, another of Nation's well-known interests, receives similarly detailed attention, framed as a primary method for acquiring vocabulary and grammar through large volumes of input. Nation goes even further in this section, asserting that "the single most effective improvement that a teacher could

make to a language course would be to include a substantial extensive reading programme" (p. 173).

The chapter on extensive listening represents a relatively new interest for Nation. Briefly mentioned in his earlier work *What Should Every ESL Teacher Know?* (2013), it is expanded and updated here to include digital resources such as TED Talks and Xreading's text-to-speech functionality for graded readers. Still, Nation concedes that current pedagogical technology has not yet fully addressed key issues such as vocabulary control and speech rate, factors that affect accessibility for low proficiency learners. On the whole, the techniques are thoughtfully explained and grounded in sound pedagogy, but there are certain limitations of the book that merit closer examination.

While Nation's Four Strands framework is a useful tool for organizing the book, its application occasionally feels overly prescriptive. In addition to using the strands to categorize each technique, Nation includes specific suggestions for the amount of instructional time that should be allocated to each technique: sometimes as precise as 1/16th of a course. Although it is meant as a guideline, it does seem like an impractical expectation for most teachers and program coordinators to make such detailed calculations. Although the book's modular structure allows it to be read technique-by-technique or cover-to-cover, when read sequentially, the consistent format of each chapter can feel repetitive. Nation frequently references the same studies, revisits foundational principles, and cross-references other chapters—pedagogically sound in terms of reinforcing key concepts, but potentially tedious for linear readers. There are also occasional inconsistencies in terminology and missed opportunities to reflect current trends. The use of terms like *mobile* or *cell phone*, instead of the more widely used *smartphone*, as well as references to bilingual dictionaries and letter writing, suggests a recycling of content from older works. More notably, the book does not address emerging technologies such as large language models (e.g., ChatGPT), which have become increasingly relevant in discussions about language learning and instruction. Terminological overlap is another minor issue that may cause confusion. For example, the use of interchangeable terms such as between *techniques*, *activities*, and *tasks* as well as more familiar terms in the field such as *timed writing* and *speed writing* instead being referred to here as the more specific *10-minute writing*, despite Nation admitting the arbitrariness of the allotted time. Finally, the absence of references to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is surprising. The problem-solving speaking technique, in particular, shares

significant conceptual ground with TBLT, yet the connection is never made explicit. Given the relevance and influence of TBLT in current SLA research and pedagogy, this omission feels like a missed opportunity to ground Nation's techniques more firmly within contemporary discourse.

These are relatively minor critiques of what is ultimately an exceptional resource for language educators seeking to expand their repertoire of teaching techniques. The book also serves as a cumulative reflection of Nation's decades-long contribution to the field of language education. Renowned for his foundational research on vocabulary acquisition—including the creation of the widely used Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation, 1983), Nation's expertise is particularly evident in the chapter on vocabulary flashcards, though it expands and permeates every aspect of the book. What makes this book especially valuable is its ability to synthesize a vast body of research and practical knowledge into a format that is immediately usable by teachers. It exemplifies how scholarly work can bridge the often-lamented gap between research and classroom practice, a concern noted by Ellis and Shintani (2014) and many others. Early in the book, Nation reminds readers that “learning how to learn can change people’s lives” (p. 54); this is a sentiment that encapsulates the book’s broader goal: to equip teachers with not just activities, but with a pedagogical mindset that promotes learner autonomy and long-term growth.

References

- Ellis, R., & Shintani, N. (2014). *Exploring language pedagogy through second language acquisition research*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203796580>
- Nation, I. S. P. (1983). Testing and teaching vocabulary. *Guidelines*, 5(1), 12–25. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444315783.ch28>
- Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *What should every EFL teacher know?* Compass Publishing.

***Nicky Hockly's 30 Essentials for Using Artificial Intelligence* (Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers). Nicky Hockly. Cambridge University Press and Assessment, 2024. ix + 126 pp. Approx. ¥2,185. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009804509>**

Reviewed by

Rebecca L. M. Funabashi
King's College London

Nicky Hockly's 30 Essentials for Using Artificial Intelligence is part of the Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers Pocket Editions series, edited by Scott Thornbury. The series aims to provide short, accessible texts with practical guidance for teachers, and this volume is no exception. Hockly, a long-standing contributor to the field of educational technology in language teaching and learning, draws on both her experience writing practical teaching resources (e.g., Hockly, 2017) and more theoretical collaborations on digital literacies (e.g., Pegrum et al., 2022) to effectively demystify artificial intelligence (AI) for language teachers.

Although most chapters include references, which range from empirical studies in peer-reviewed journals to news articles and blog posts, this book is not necessarily written for an academic audience. Rather, it is aimed at practicing language teachers, reflected in the accessible writing style and the inclusion of step-by-step teaching ideas throughout. Hockly engages with broader discourses around AI and relates them to language teaching and learning, enabling teachers to navigate both pedagogical uses and the wider social and ethical implications of AI.

As indicated by the title, Hockly presents thirty essentials for using AI and each of these has its own short chapter. The thirty chapters are organized thematically into four sections that progressively build upon each other, yet each chapter remains sufficiently self-contained to be read independently. Hockly helpfully includes brief summaries at the beginning of each section and chapter, and cites chapter numbers when referring back to previously covered concepts or topics.

The first section, Setting the Scene, lays the groundwork for readers by defining key terms and introducing various types of AI, including rule-based, data-driven, and generative AI (GenAI). Hockly traces the history of AI in language teaching and learning from its early origins in the 1960s to the current landscape of GenAI chatbot tools, like ChatGPT. She offers

a clear and accessible explanation of neural networks and large language models (LLMs) which underpin the GenAI tools used in language teaching and learning, such as voice recognition and chatbots. This is invaluable information for teachers because it facilitates understanding of why the tools have the limitations they do and can thus inform pedagogical decision-making. This section also connects AI technologies to second language acquisition concepts of motivation, scaffolding, and feedback, examining the extent to which AI tools can support learners in these areas. Further, Hockly draws attention to the issue that many popular AI-powered apps for language learning are based on mechanistic, behaviorist views of language learning. The section ends by critiquing the “cycle of hype and hyperbole” (Hockly, 2024, p. 20) around novel educational technologies and how GenAI is the latest candidate for techno-solutionism, encouraging teachers to develop critical digital literacy for themselves and their learners.

The second section, *AI in Language Teaching and Learning*, explores practical applications of AI inside and outside of the language classroom. Hockly covers a wide range of AI-powered tools including chatbots, adaptive learning systems, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). This section adopts a critical lens to explore the affordances and drawbacks of AI for both learners and teachers. For instance, whereas earlier chatbots offered limited interaction, GenAI now allows learners to engage in self-directed conversation practice with significantly more natural and coherent dialogue. However, it may unfairly penalize non-native speakers’ pronunciation, as LLMs are often trained on data reflecting only so-called “standard” language varieties. Hockly also explores how teachers may save time by utilizing GenAI for administrative work, developing lesson materials, or differentiating lessons. She emphasizes the importance of teachers using their own judgment on AI output before using it with learners and reminds us of the duty to protect our learners’ data. Particularly noteworthy is the chapter on developing writing skills with AI, as there are concerns in the language teaching field that GenAI’s ability to produce coherent texts could lead to misuse or hinder learners’ skill development (Moorhouse, 2024). Throughout, Hockly positions AI as a potential learning aid and encourages teachers with practical ideas to support learners to use it responsibly.

In the third section, *The Big Questions*, Hockly broadens the scope of the book to examine in more detail the ethical, philosophical, and legal issues emerging from AI. These chapters engage with complex topics such as fairness and bias in AI systems, accessibility, the digital divide, data ownership

and privacy, and assessment and academic integrity. Hockly encourages teachers to raise these issues with learners, offering classroom discussion activities and ideas for building critical digital literacy. This approach encapsulates her advocacy of 'human-centred AI' (Hockly, 2024, p. 70), which argues for use of AI which enhances teaching and learning by focusing on AI augmenting human interaction and skills, rather than replacing them. This section also addresses concerns about AI-enabled cheating in assessments, suggesting more authentic and process-oriented alternatives, such as project-based learning. These chapters strike a balance between criticality and practicality, aiming to equip teachers with the knowledge needed to make pedagogically and ethically sound decisions.

The final section, Self-development and AI, focuses on wellbeing, teacher professional development, and learner autonomy. Hockly addresses the anxiety many teachers feel about the potential of AI to replace human educators and recommends that teachers develop AI literacy as a path to confidence and agency. She empowers practicing teachers to engage in action research projects by providing a six-step framework and an imagined case study to illustrate the process and its benefits. This section also explores how AI can support professional development and deepen understanding through effective prompt engineering and Socratic dialogue with GenAI chatbots. The final chapter looks toward the future of AI in education, considering concerns such as teacher deskilling or the possible use of AI in place of teachers in underserved educational contexts. Rather than make firm predictions, Hockly invites readers to remain critically engaged as the field evolves.

The pace of innovation in AI development creates obvious difficulties in writing a book about practical teaching applications of AI. For example, this book was written and published before Deepseek emerged in early 2025 and disrupted the GenAI industry (Baptista, 2025). Hockly is forward-thinking and mitigates this issue to a great extent by not focusing on particular tools, but on their main functionality. Rather than focusing on ChatGPT, she gives a clear explanation of the LLMs which underpin many GenAI tools and explores how they produce images and text. This AI literacy then becomes the foundation for understanding how the tools may be used appropriately for language teaching and learning. For example, knowing that GenAI works by using its training data to generate a plausible series of chunks of language based on statistical methods helps teachers to understand why GenAI may "hallucinate" and create plausible but incorrect information. Or knowing about the biases in training data and program-

ming of GenAI can support understanding of why AI-generated images may perpetuate gender and racial stereotypes. This can, in turn, inform what we teach learners to help them use the tools effectively and appropriately. Inevitably, any published book on AI will soon become outdated, but Hockly's approach helps to extend the book's shelf life in terms of relevance.

One of the book's most significant contributions is its thorough yet accessible treatment of various ethical issues surrounding AI use in language education. For example, the environmental impact of AI is an area which has not received enough attention in the language teaching field (Maley, 2025). Hockly's book does not shy away from addressing environmental issues caused by the vast amounts of electricity and water GenAI consumes and proposes ways we can support learners to research and discuss these issues. Hockly also explores issues which many teachers may not be aware of, such as the invisible human labour behind training AI, which is often done by English-speaking graduates in the Global South under precarious working conditions. By presenting these important topics alongside practical suggestions for classroom discussions and activities, Hockly not only raises readers' awareness but also empowers them to foster critical digital literacy among their learners. In doing so, the book positions itself as a rare and necessary resource that equips educators to navigate not just how AI can be used in language teaching and learning, but also to consider collaboratively with learners about whether or not it should be used.

Another strength of this book is that each section stands alone. If your interest is solely in language teaching and learning, you can read only those chapters without needing any background knowledge from the prior introductory section on AI. In addition, Hockly's straightforward explanations do not require any technical background to understand, and any linguistic or pedagogical concepts discussed are clearly explained. The short chapters and clear ideas are suited to all levels of practicing language teachers as they present the essential key information in an accessible and easy-to-digest way. Although this brevity may leave more academically focused readers desiring more detail, the reference list included in most chapters could offer a starting point for further reading.

The book is comprehensive in its inclusion and explanation of AI tools, though chapters on AR and VR may initially seem out of place in a book about AI and language teaching. While both technologies utilize AI, they are not commonplace in the language classroom due to issues of cost and accessibility as they require each individual to have a device like a smartphone or an expensive VR headset. However, as one aim of the book

is to develop teachers' digital literacies, these chapters have value for broadening readers' awareness of the wide variety of digital tools which utilize AI technology. Further, Hockly addresses the issue of cost by adapting classroom activities using AR and VR to avoid the need for expensive equipment. For instance, she suggests VR activities which are possible without headsets, such as an online VR museum tour. Overall, Hockly maintains throughout that teachers should use their expertise to weigh the pedagogical value of technology integration into the classroom carefully and come to their own conclusions for their contexts.

Since Hockly is writing for a broad audience of language teachers, suggesting specific activities poses a challenge, as readers' teaching contexts may vary considerably. Most of the teaching suggestions throughout the book focus on group discussions and project work, which may work well in secondary and tertiary classroom contexts but may not be directly applicable to all learner levels or teaching contexts. Nonetheless, experienced language teachers can draw on the knowledge and teaching ideas presented throughout the book as a springboard to adapt activities to their specific contexts. Taken as a whole, the foundational AI literacy and knowledge Hockly provides can equip teachers to engage with AI more thoughtfully and critically within their language teaching practice.

To conclude, this book is a timely and practical contribution to the growing conversation on AI in language education. The book strikes a careful balance between accessibility and critical insight, offering clear explanations of key concepts while maintaining a strong pedagogical focus. Importantly, the book does not present AI as a solution but encourages informed, reflective decision-making grounded in careful ethical considerations and established principles of language teaching and learning. By addressing not only the pedagogical affordances of AI but also the ethical, environmental, and social concerns, Hockly equips teachers with both practical tools and the critical digital literacy to use them and instruct their learners appropriately. Further, it empowers teachers to develop their own guidelines around ethical and appropriate AI use in their classrooms and institutions.

The book's thematic organization, straightforward explanations, and range of classroom activities make it suitable for practicing language teachers who are interested in integrating AI into their teaching in principled and reflective ways. Those less familiar with AI will appreciate the accessible language and explanation of key concepts and how they relate to language teaching and learning. Although the book is primarily targeting

practicing language teachers, the comprehensive yet straightforward presentation of information, bolstered by a diverse range of sources, provides an informative overview for anyone working in education at varying stages of familiarity with AI.

References

- Baptista, E. (2025, January 28). *What is DeepSeek and why is it disrupting the AI sector?* Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/what-is-deepseek-why-is-it-disrupting-ai-sector-2025-01-27/>
- Hockly, N. (2017). *ETpedia Technology: 500 ideas for using technology in the English language classroom*. Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd.
- Hockly, N. (2024). *Nicky Hockly's 30 essentials for using artificial intelligence*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009804509>
- Maley, A. (2025). Response to introduction to the special issue on the future of TESOL. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, 7(2), 3–4. <https://doi.org/10.58304/ijts.250502>
- Moorhouse, B. L. (2024). Generative artificial intelligence and ELT. *ELT Journal*, 78(4), 378–392. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccae032>
- Pegrum, M., Hockly, N., & Dudeney, G. (2022). *Digital literacies* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003262541>

***Mindsets in Language Education*. Adrian Leis, Åsta Haukås, Nigel Mantou Lou and Sachiko Nakamura. Multilingual Matters, 2025. xxi + 273 pp.
<https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800418325>**

Reviewed by

Takeshi Onodera

The University of Queensland

Mindsets in Language Education, edited by Leis et al., explores the role of the recently growing field of mindsets, beliefs individuals hold regarding their intelligence (Dweck, 1999), in foreign/second language (L2) learning and teaching across various contexts. The book addresses a wide range of key themes, including what types of mindsets learners have in different L2

learning domains and how they are uniquely linked with outcomes (e.g., psychological variables and learning outcomes), how teachers perceive their teaching mindset and how these are manifested in daily teaching practice, and what strategies practitioners can employ to foster growth mindsets among learners. Through these inquiries, the editors challenge the common myth that language learning skills are innate and highlight the importance of nurture over nature in the process of L2 learning and teaching, which requires sustained, long-term motivation and engagement.

Given the expanding body of research on L2 mindsets (Lou & Noels, 2019; Mercer & Ryan, 2010), this book establishes a unique and timely presence in the field. The volume spans a variety of topics on the role of mindsets, rigorously highlighting their importance in long-term engagement in L2 education for both research and pedagogical practices. It critically examines theoretical foundations, empirical findings, and practical interventions across three parts. The introductory chapter outlines the history of mindset research and establishes a conceptual foundation for the chapters that follow, helping readers to situate mindset theory within the broader field of L2 education.

Part 1 (Chapters 2–6) investigates learner mindsets across diverse L2 contexts. Teng and Mizumoto (Chapter 2) develop and validate a tool measuring growth mindsets in vocabulary learning among Chinese EFL undergraduate students, opening a new research area of L2 mindsets in relation to vocabulary development. Nakamura and Leis (Chapter 3) highlight how cultural influences play a crucial role in shaping the interconnections between L2 emotions, goal orientations, and mindsets. Apple et al. (Chapter 4) compare mindsets between STEM and non-STEM Japanese university students, finding no significant group differences but supporting the conceptual separability of growth and fixed mindsets. Khajavy and Vaziri (Chapter 5) demonstrate that mastery goals predict growth mindsets positively and fixed mindsets negatively and that anxiety is mediated by only fixed mindsets in the Iranian context. Interestingly, Sundqvist (Chapter 6), through the case of Anders, an 83-year-old Swedish third-age L2 learner, shows how a strong growth mindset enhances motivation and engagement in L2 learning, well-being, and identity formation in late adulthood.

Part 2 (Chapters 7–11) shifts focus to teacher mindsets and their effects on pedagogy and learners. Kırmızı (Chapter 7) finds that teachers with growth mindsets tend to implement engaging and supportive teaching, whereas teachers with fixed mindsets rely on more traditional grammar-focused instructions with frequent L1 use. Kızıldağ (Chapter 8) uses

narrative inquiry to show how mentors' mindsets shape and foster the pre-service teachers' development during the practicum period. Yonata's autoethnographic study (Chapter 9) illustrates how growth mindset strategies (e.g., continuous efforts and effective strategy use) supported his professional identity formation as a PhD student and early career EFL educator, in the face of challenges. Haukås and Mercer (Chapter 10) build on their previous work (Haukås & Mercer, 2022) by investigating experienced teachers' beliefs regarding teaching competence development. They propose an insightful distinction between acquisition and learning view of mindsets, framed as being socially shaped by institutional and cultural contexts. Grounded in Chinese sayings that endorse capability decline over time, Yao and Wang (Chapter 11) explore a unique picture of decremental mindsets and its links with anxiety and motivation through a person-focused approach, suggesting that cultural influences may significantly mediate motivation.

Part 3 (Chapters 12–14) presents intervention studies designed to foster growth mindset and motivation. Castillo (Chapter 12) describes a series of online sessions with Chilean secondary students that increased growth mindset but had limited long-term impact on motivation. Drom and Lou (Chapter 13) report on a semester-long intervention in Canada using tasks that emphasized students' metacognitive skills (how L2 learning competences can be developed). Their results support the usefulness of these metacognitive tasks to develop growth mindsets and motivation. Finally, Ramirez et al. (Chapter 14) conceptualize growth mindset practices in the Colombian context, illustrating an architecture of growth mindset teaching practice through sayings, doings, and relatings. Teachers created process-focused classrooms that emphasized resilience, challenges and mistakes, and flexibility in teaching styles.

In the concluding chapter, the editors beautifully synthesize key insights and offer future directions for research and practical strategies for practitioners. One promising direction is the examination of mindsets in relation to the use of technology in L2 learning, such as machine translation and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). In relation to pedagogical practices, the editors also advocate for integrating mindset-driven pedagogical ideas into various teaching approaches, such as task-based language teaching (TBLT), noting a natural, conceptual alignment with growth mindset principles.

Although mindsets have received increasing attention in L2 research, existing studies remain fragmented and inconclusive (Lou, 2025). A large body of prior work has focused primarily on L2 learners, with relatively

little attention given to teachers' mindsets or to how contextual and sociocultural factors influence mindset development (Lou, 2025; Lou & Noels, 2019, 2020). Moreover, methodological approaches have often been descriptive or correlational in nature, typically limited to a narrow range of psychological constructs. These approaches have lacked a holistic perspective and rarely included intervention and longitudinal studies. As a result, meta-analytic studies have reported weak to moderate effects of mindsets on achievement and adaptive outcomes in L2 education (Lou & Noels, 2019; Shirvan et al., 2024), highlighting the need for more nuanced, context-specific, and systematic research.

In response, this volume makes a notable conceptual contribution and advancement by foregrounding the role of sociocultural and educational conditions in shaping mindsets, offering both context-specific insights and broader cross-contextual patterns. L2 mindsets are explored from various angles: learners and teachers, providing valuable insights into how mindsets manifest and interact within varied educational landscapes. The contexts covered in this book span a wide range of educational levels (e.g., secondary to tertiary education), ages (young to old learners), domains (vocabulary to general L2 learning), teaching experience (pre-service and experienced teachers), geographical locations (Asian, European, and North and South American countries), and cultures (collectivist and individualist cultures). These diverse perspectives address the frequently cited issue of the simple overgeneralization of the findings attributed to geographical and cultural aspects (i.e., Western versus Eastern cultures) and individual differences. Together, these in-depth insights offer learners, practitioners, and researchers valuable ideas and inspiration for future research and practical applications of approaches to empower learners and teachers to become resilient and persevere in the long journey of L2 learning and teaching.

Methodologically, the volume is also commendable for its breadth and innovation. It features a variety of designs: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, to explore mindsets from multiple perspectives and approaches, including descriptive and experimental approaches. These innovative approaches and methodological diversity enable a richer understanding of how mindsets are manifested, sustained, and transformed in language education and how they may be operationalized in future large-scale studies. Notably, the experimental studies in Part 3 help to bridge the gap between theory and practice, which is often pointed out in previous research on L2 education (Sato & Loewen, 2022). In this regard, this

volume is not merely a collection of studies but serves as a springboard for future scholarship and pedagogical innovation, striving “to continue on the road to understanding why students and teachers make the decisions they do and how we might be able to help them make the decisions that lead to their success” (p. 272).

One notable limitation, however, is the book’s exclusive focus on English learning and teaching contexts. Despite its title, *Mindsets in Language Education* does not address mindsets in languages other than English (LOTEs). This oversight is significant, given the unequal status of languages worldwide. English maintains a dominant, privileged position in classrooms and research, while LOTEs are treated marginally. Learners and teachers of LOTEs might be especially susceptible to fixed mindsets due to sociopolitical and ideological norms, such as monolingualism which views English as the only necessary language. Investigating mindsets in these contexts would reveal important and nuanced insights into how sociocultural factors in relation to language education influence and are influenced by mindset development and how learners and teachers maintain and improve motivation and identity in less supported situations. For instance, in contexts where bilingualism is less accepted, LOTE learners and teachers may struggle with self-efficacy or be influenced by social attitudes that discourage long-term language investment. Mindset theory could illuminate the psychological barriers and affordances that shape LOTE learning and teaching.

Despite the noted gap, *Mindsets in Language Education* is a significant and timely contribution to the field. It brings together a rich collection of studies that not only advance theoretical understandings but also provide educators with concrete strategies for future practical classroom application. It successfully highlights the complexity of mindsets, making a persuasive case for the importance of growth mindsets in language education. This book is highly recommended for all L2 researchers, teacher educators, language instructors, curriculum developers, and policymakers who are responsible for and interested in mindsets and motivation in language education. The practical strategies presented in the book have the potential to foster resilience and effective learning and teaching approaches, ultimately contributing to sustained motivation, successful L2 outcomes, and optimal well-being, both academically and personally.

References

- Dweck, C. S. (1999). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development*. Psychology Press.
- Haukås, Å., & Mercer, S. (2022). Exploring pre-service language teachers' mindsets using a sorting activity. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 16(3), 221–233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2021.1923721>
- Lou, N. M. (2025). Sustaining growth needs contextual supports: The mindset × ecological-system approach to motivation. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 15(2), 401–426. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.48250>
- Lou, N. M., & Noels, K. A. (2019). Promoting growth in foreign and second language education: A research agenda for mindsets in language learning and teaching. *System*, 86, 102126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.102126>
- Lou, N. M., & Noels, K. A. (2020). Language mindset, meaning-making, and motivation. In M. Lamb, K. Csizér, A. Henry, & S. Ryan (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of motivation for language learning* (pp. 537–555). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28380-3_26
- Mercer, S., & Ryan, S. (2010). A mindset for EFL: Learners' beliefs about the role of natural talent. *ELT Journal*, 64(4), 436–444. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccp083>
- Sato, M., & Loewen, S. (2022). The research–practice dialogue in second language learning and teaching: Past, present, and future. *The Modern Language Journal*, 106, 509–527. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12791>

JALT Journal Aims and Scope

JALT Journal is a bi-annual, Scopus-approved research journal of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (全国語学教育学会). JALT's larger mission is to support the research programs and professional development of JALT members, promote excellence in language learning, teaching, and research, and provide opportunities for those involved in language education. In line with this mission, *JALT Journal* publishes high-quality English- and Japanese-language, quantitative and qualitative, theoretically-informed and empirically-grounded studies of relevance to second/foreign language education in Japan. Although emphasis is placed on the Japanese context, *JALT Journal* values contributions which also transcend geographical boundaries to illuminate the complex interaction between language, language use, people, education, and society across cultural and socio-political contexts.

When possible, submissions to *JALT Journal* should aim to be both descriptive (*What is my data?*) and explanatory (*Why is my data like this and not otherwise?*) in purpose, and further stimulate scholarly debate, to hopefully improve existing applied linguistic scholarship around the world. Areas of interest include but are not limited to the following:

- Bilingualism and multilingualism
- Classroom-based language education
- Cognitive linguistics
- Contrastive linguistics
- Conversation/discourse/critical discourse analysis
- Critical language pedagogy
- Curriculum design and teaching methods
- Intercultural communicative competence
- Language acquisition/learning
- Language policy and planning
- Language testing/evaluation
- Phonetics
- Pragmatics
- Psycholinguistics
- Semantics
- Sociolinguistics
- Syntax
- Teacher training
- Translation and interpretation
- Vocabulary

Guidelines

Style

Authors are encouraged to submit manuscripts in five categories: (1) full-length articles, (2) short research reports or papers addressing specific theoretical and/or methodological issues in applied linguistics research (*Research Forums*), (3) theory-grounded essays which may include analysis of primary or secondary data (*Perspectives*), (4) comments on previously published *JALT Journal* articles (*Point-to-Point*), and (5) book/media reviews (*Reviews*) either requested by the Book Reviews editor or suggested by the author. Articles should be written for a general audience of language educators; therefore, statistical techniques and specialized terminologies must be clearly explained and their use clearly justified.

Authors are responsible for obtaining permissions for any copyrighted material included in their manuscript submission. When submitting a manuscript based on a thesis or dissertation published in an institutional repository, authors are responsible for checking with the copyright holder for permission to publish portions of the original text.

JALT Journal follows the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th edition* (available from <<https://apastyle.apa.org/products/publication-manual-7th-edition>>). A downloadable copy of the *JALT Journal* style sheet is also available on our website at <<https://jalt-publications.org/jj/>>. Instructions for online submissions can also be found at this website.

Format

Full-length articles must not be more than 8,000 words, including references, notes, tables, and figures. *Research Forum* submissions should not be more than 4,000 words. *Perspectives* submissions should not be more than 5,000 words. *Point-to-Point* comments on previously published articles should not be more than 1,000 words in length, and *Reviews* should generally be around 2,000 words. All submissions must be word processed in A4 or 8.5" x 11" format with line spacing set at 1.5 lines. **For refereed submissions, names and identifying references should appear only on the cover sheet.** Authors are responsible for the accuracy of references and reference citations and for obtaining any permissions for copyrighted material contained in the manuscript.

Submission Procedure

Please submit the following two documents in MS Word format to the appropriate editor indicated below:

1. Cover sheet with the title and author name(s), affiliation(s), and contact information of the corresponding author.
2. A blinded manuscript, including title, abstract, and keywords, with no citations referring to the author. Do not use running heads and do not include your biographical information. Follow the *JALT Journal* style sheet. Blinded manuscripts should not include meta-data.

If the manuscript is accepted for publication, a Japanese translation of the abstract will be required. Authors will also be asked to provide biographical information. Insert all tables and figures in the manuscript. Do not send them as separate files.

Submissions will be acknowledged within 1 month of their receipt. All manuscripts are first reviewed by the editorial team to ensure they comply with *JALT Journal* Guidelines. Those considered for publication are subject to blind review by at least two readers, with special attention given to (1) compliance with *JALT Journal* Editorial Policy, (2) the significance and originality of the submission, and (3) the use of appropriate research design and methodology. The first round of review is usually completed within 3 months. Each contributing author of published articles and *Book Reviews* will receive one complimentary copy of the *Journal* and a PDF of the article (*Book Reviews* are compiled together as one PDF). *JALT Journal* does not provide off-prints. Contributing authors have the option of ordering further copies of *JALT Journal* (contact JALT Central Office for price details).

Restrictions

Papers submitted to *JALT Journal* must not have been previously published, nor should they be under consideration for publication elsewhere. *JALT Journal* has First World Publication Rights, as defined by International Copyright Conventions, for all manuscripts published. If accepted, the editors reserve the right to edit all copy for length, style, and clarity without prior notification to authors. Plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, will result in articles not being published or being retracted and may also result in the author(s) being banned from submitting to any JALT publication. For further information, see the JALT Publications Statement of Ethics and Malpractice at: <https://jalt-publications.org/jalt-publications-statement-ethics-and-malpractice>

Full-Length Articles, Research Forum, Perspectives, and Point-to-Point Submissions

Please upload submissions in these categories to the following website:

<https://jalt-publications.org/content/index.php/jj>

Manuscripts should follow the **American Psychological Association (APA) 7th Edition style**. Please indicate if your submission is a 1) Full-length article; 2) *Perspectives* article; 3) *Research Forum* article or 4) *Point-to-Point* submission.

For any general inquiries about English-language submissions, please contact:

Jeremie Bouchard, *JALT Journal* Editor
jaltpubs.jj.ed@jalt.org

Japanese-Language Manuscripts

JALT Journal welcomes Japanese-language manuscripts on second/foreign language teaching and learning as well as Japanese-language reviews of publications. Submissions must conform to the Editorial Policy and Guidelines given above. Authors must provide a detailed abstract in English, 500 to 750 words in length, for full-length manuscripts and a 100-word abstract for reviews. Refer to the Japanese-Language Guidelines (following page) for details. Please send Japanese-language manuscripts to:

Masayuki Kudo, *JALT Journal* Japanese-Language Editor
jaltpubs.jj.ed.j@jalt.org

Reviews

The editors invite reviews of books and other relevant publications in the field of language education. A list of publications that have been sent to JALT for review is published bimonthly in *The Language Teacher* and can be found online in each issue at <<https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/>>. Review authors receive one copy of the *Journal*. *JALT Journal's* latest *Reviews* guidelines can be found in Melodie Cook's *Expositions* piece published in the November 2023 issue. Please send submissions, queries, or requests for books, materials, and review guidelines to:

Melodie Cook, *JALT Journal* Reviews Editor
jaltpubs.jj.reviews@jalt.org

Inquiries about Subscriptions, Ordering *JALT Journal*, or Advertising

JALT Central Office
Marunouchi Trust Tower Main Building 20F
1-8-3 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0005 JAPAN
Tel.: (+81) 3-5288-5443
Email: jco@jalt.org URL: <https://jalt.org>

日本語論文投稿要領

JALT Journalでは日本語で執筆された(a)論文、(b)研究報告、(c)展望論文、(d) JALT Journalに掲載された著作物へのコメント・考察、(e)書評を募集しています。(a)論文と(b)研究報告の違いは、以下の通り字数制限による違いです。(c)展望論文は、言語教育研究に関する課題に焦点をあてた短い論文で、先行研究の検証、理論や1次2次データに基づく議論などを含むものです。文体:一般的な学術論文のスタイルを用い、章立ての仕方や参考文献のデータの書き方などは、*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition) の定める方式に合わせて下さい。JALT Journal書式シート(日本語原稿用)を以下からダウンロードできます<<https://jalt-publications.org/jj/>>。なお、JALT Journalの読者は現場の教師が主なので、特殊な専門用語や統計的手法は、わかりやすく定義するか説明を加えるなどして下さい。原稿:長さは、参考文献リストも含め、(a)論文は25,000字、(b)研究報告は13,000字、(c)望論文は16,000字、(d) JALT Journalに掲載された著作物へのコメント・考察は2,000字、(e)書評は1,500~3,000字以内です。A4の用紙に横書きで、1行40字、1ページ30行で印刷して下さい。手書きの原稿は受け付けません。

提出するもの:

JALT Journal書式シート(日本語原稿用)を参考に作成の上、電子メールの添付書類でお送りください。なお、上記(a)論文・(e)書評のどのカテゴリーへの投稿かを明記ください。審査を経て掲載の認められた草稿は、図表などを全て写植版にしたものにして提出願います。

査読:編集委員会で投稿要領に合っているかどうかを確認したあと、少なくとも二人の査読者が査読を行います。査読者には執筆者の名前は知らされません。査読の過程では特に、原稿がJALT Journalの目的に合っているか、言語教育にとって意味があるか、独創性はあるか、研究計画や方法論は適切か等が判定されます。査読は通常二か月以内に終了しますが、特に投稿の多い場合などは審査にそれ以上の時間がかかることがあります。

注意:JALT Journalに投稿する原稿は、すでに出版されているものや他の学術雑誌に投稿中のものは避けて下さい。JALT Journalは、そこに掲載されるすべての論文に関して国際著作権協定による世界初出版権を持ちます。なお、お送りいただいた原稿は返却しませんので、控を保存して下さい。

投稿原稿送り先またはお問い合わせ:

〒001-0016 北海道札幌市北区北16条西2丁目 藤女子大学
JALT Journal 日本語編集者 工藤 雅之
電話: 011-736-5368
jaltpubs.jj.ed.j@jalt.org

JALT Journal 第47巻 第2号

2025年 10月20日 印刷
2025年 11月1日 発行
編集人 ブシャー ジェレミ
発行人 クレア・カーネーコー
発行所 全国語学教育学会事務局
〒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
印刷所 コーシンジャ株式会社
〒530-0043 大阪市北区天満1-18-4 天満ファーストビル301 TEL(06) 6351-8795



JALT2025 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

 **National Olympics Youth Memorial Center, Tokyo**

 **Friday, October 31 – Sunday, November 2, 2025**

At a Glance:

- 3 plenary sessions and workshops, featured and invited speaker sessions and workshops
- Research and practice-oriented presentations and workshops
- Educational Materials Exhibit (EME)
- Special Interest Group (SIG) forums
- JALT Junior sessions
- NEW: Plenary speakers panel discussion, theme-featured panel discussion



Tokyo Skytree



Shibuya Crossing



Rainbow Bridge



Imperial Palace
Gardens



Tokyo Station



<https://events.jalt.org/event/37/>

*Schedule is subject to change. We apologize for any inconvenience caused.