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Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) is dedicated to the aid and assistance of fellow educators in the Asia Pacific region.

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Dedication

The *THT Journal* is dedicated to the memory of William "Bill" Balsamo (1943 – 2008) the founder of Teachers Helping Teachers.

"We are more than an organization, we are an idea, a concept." – Bill Balsamo

Preface

Patrick Dougherty
Editor, the *THT Journal*

It is with pleasure that I welcome our community to this, the 9th volume of the *THT Journal*. The *THT Journal* was begun as a proceedings publication to feature authors who had presented their research and teaching ideas at THT programs in Bangladesh, Laos, Vietnam, the Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, and, later, Nepal. Subsequently, the *THT Journal* expanded its scope and developed into an energetic experiment in collaboration and explication where researchers and teachers from the countries, institutions, organizations, and communities that help sponsor THT programs might also find a venue for their research, reports, explorations, and teaching strategies. Let me introduce you to the authors of the articles in this volume and issue:

Prof C. Brown teaches at Akita International University, Japan. She is a longstanding member of THT and regularly presents at international workshops and conferences. She has published resource books, online EFL/ESL materials and numerous academic works, and manages a teacher/resource development project, "Stories About Ourselves", mentoring Bangladeshi English teachers and creating culturally relevant EFL resources.

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Marian Wang is Associate Professor at the Institute for Language and Culture at Konan University in Japan. She has taught at Kobe University, Kwansei Gakuin University, and the International Trade Institute (Taiwan). She has experience working for international organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam America, Partners for Democratic Change, the World Trade Organization, and UNICEF. She holds an Ed.D. from the University of Liverpool, an M.A. in TESOL from the Monterey Institute of International Studies, an M.A. in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University, and a Certificate in International Studies in Economics and Politics from the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. Her research focuses on fostering global citizens and World Englishes.

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From Research to Practice and Back again: A Cyclical Approach to the Application of Research to Vocabulary Teaching and Learning in a Japanese Tertiary Context, via a Focused Writing Production Activity

C. J. Brown

Abstract

Bridging the gap between research and classroom practice poses challenges for researchers and classroom educators alike. While those engaged in academic research bravely explore new territory, their findings do not always percolate to teachers at the chalk-face in a timely fashion, creating delays between knowing and applying. This article describes one attempt to span this divide, using a newly articulated model of an innovative research cycle format, with examples of how this was implemented in a Japanese tertiary context. There, two EL teachers set out to investigate vocabulary acquisition research aiming to identify possible applications to classroom practice. Their reading motivated a collaborative research project analyzing commercial EFL/ESL textbooks, and created new classroom initiatives springing primarily from studies on the Task-induced Involvement Load hypothesis and incidental vocabulary acquisition. This led to the design and implementation of a new writing vocabulary production task aimed at activating the need, search, and evaluation principles of the Task Involvement Load construct. While the efficacy of the writing task has yet to be investigated via quantitative studies, informal qualitative data gleaned from learners provide positive indications that it is a preferred approach to vocabulary learning vis-à-vis more traditional vocabulary learning tasks. Learners stated their desire to maintain use of the task beyond the course,

claiming it to be a more effective way of learning vocabulary, and that it has helped improve writing skills, consolidate course content knowledge, and provide freer opportunities to share their ideas.

Keywords: research to practice; vocabulary acquisition

Introduction

The divide between the work of academic Applied Linguistics researchers and classroom language teachers often engenders a delay in the application of new findings to classroom settings, slowing the process of innovation and change. Tertiary EFL/ESL instructors, also employed as academic scholars, are often expected to be at the cutting edge in terms of informed pedagogy. In reality, however, they typically juggle a multiplicity of academic responsibilities alongside time-driven demands of lesson preparation, delivery and assessment, leaving little space for focused investigation outside semester breaks. Their classroom practice is no less affected by the research/application delay than that of teachers in other educational sectors for whom scholarly investigation is not an employment requirement.

This delay may also occur if their field of expertise and/or research interest is not directly related to the courses they teach, meaning they are less likely to be exposed to research of direct relevance to their actual teaching. Native English-speaking teachers with a PhD in medieval English literature, and no qualifications in Applied Linguistics, for example, may find themselves teaching EFL skills' courses in a university abroad, having been employed because English is their first language, or because they hold a postgraduate qualification that relates in some way to

English. While their teaching requires preparation and reflection pertaining to EFL instruction, their research interest may find them up at night unravelling esoteric mysteries hidden in the works of Chaucer, for example. In other words, pursuing completely different research interests altogether.

On the other hand, the university context, with its lesser number of teaching contact hours than secondary, primary or private language schools, theoretically allows for a better balance between research and day-to-day teaching. Tertiary teachers are thus in an enviable position when attempting to bridge the scholarship/pedagogy divide, having unique opportunities to expedite the process of dissemination of new research findings and thus take a lead in the enactment of change. This article presents one example of a newly articulated research-practice-reflection-research cycle designed by the author and named 'RPRR', as a practical model for those interested in more easily overcoming this knowledge/application gap.

The article briefly explains what the RPRR cycle is, then describes in greater detail the various phases in the cycle, using the example of the author's application of vocabulary acquisition research findings to vocabulary instruction in her Japanese university setting as a model. It demonstrates how a RPRR cycle was implemented, and begins by showing how the first phase, that of background research in the field of interest, forms the foundation for one's own research projects. In the second phase, the article demonstrates how the implementation of research findings, and learning principles gleaned from these, can be used to improve classroom practise and learner experience. Phase three explains the need for reflection on the effects of implementation in order to further improve teaching and

learning, and phase four shows how this reflection may initiate further research, thus leading into a new RPRR cycle.

The RPRR cycle is a new iteration of classroom/practitioner-based research, which has some similarities to Action Research practice. However, while Action Research approaches typically begin with the identification of an existing problem, then move on to search, through interventions and reflection, for a solution (as outlined, for example in Lewin's early description (Lewin, 1946), the RPRR cycle is motivated from a different quarter. It actively seeks to investigate existing research in a specific field of interest with the intention being to more quickly implement important and up-to-date research findings into classroom practice, for the purposes of enhancing teaching and learning in that specific area of interest. As such, it is a particularly useful approach for busy university teacher/researchers, though it also has application possibilities in other teaching/learning contexts, in fact, wherever teachers seek to improve and update their knowledge of current research, better understand the nature of the teaching and learning process, improve their teaching practice, and to improve the quality of their learners' classroom experiences and learning outcomes. It also consciously seeks to open up possibilities for future, new formal investigation in a way that Action Research does not actively or intrinsically aim to do.

The RPRR Cycle, Phase One: Research

The RPRR cycle has four distinct phases which can be summarized as Research, Practice, Reflection and Research. Phase One (Research) involves accessing existing knowledge, and from this identifying important principles involved in successful learning, then using this insight to

motivate and provide direction for one's own research with the view to enlarging one's own understanding (as a teacher) of key elements that need to be integrated into classroom practice.

A) Accessing Existing Knowledge

In 2013, having a longstanding interest in vocabulary acquisition, two colleagues in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Basic Education (BE) programs at Akita International University (AIU), Japan, decided to begin reading a number of well-regarded vocabulary studies with a view to conducting a joint research project and then to write a subsequent publication. In fact, several publications (in this case related to the analysis of vocabulary content and presentation in commercial EFL textbooks) eventuated (Ruegg & Brown, 2014; Brown & Ruegg, 2018; and Ruegg & Brown, 2019). More importantly, the insights gleaned from this reading/research project led to significant changes in vocabulary learning tasks, in particular a Writing Vocabulary Production Task (WVPT), and to new, more successful learner experiences in the authors' English-medium academic skills university classes.

The implications of these changes and the task itself, in relation to possible learning outcomes have not yet been fully studied by way of a quantitative investigation. However, they provide exciting potential for future research. Additionally, the cyclic RPRR process through which the two colleagues intuitively journeyed, and formalized for the first time here, provides a useful model to other teachers interested in bridging the research/practice divide, and may be of value to teachers across a wide range of contexts who are keen to improve their professional knowledge and

pedagogy through their own investigative, experimental and reflective activities.

In embarking on the RPRR cycle, the first step is to explore existing findings in the area of interest. Though teaching in Japan, the two colleagues had, coincidentally, both completed their graduate studies in Applied Linguistics under the mentorship of renowned vocabulary expert Professor Paul Nation at Victoria University in New Zealand, resulting in an ongoing interest in vocabulary acquisition and the teaching and learning practices associated with this. In pursuit of this mutual interest, the two teachers decided to read and discuss several well-recognized and relatively recent works by distinguished vocabulary scholars, which will be discussed a little later in this paper.

The reading load was split between them, each providing the other with summaries of the articles they had read. Dividing and sharing information meant that the material could be covered efficiently, and the discussion allowed for varying insights to be considered, affording each teacher the benefit of a wider perspective. Another aim was to identify key principles underpinning successful vocabulary learning that could be utilized to improve teachers' choice of materials, task selection, and task design.

After their reading, the two colleagues conducted their own investigation into commercially produced EFL/ESL textbooks to see if these actually reflected the core principles they had identified in their background reading, and based on these, whether they provided appropriate opportunities to maximize vocabulary learning potential. The impetus for this sprang from their experience of having had to use commercial textbooks that did not always meet their needs as teachers, or those of their learners, or even course

objectives prescribed in their official course syllabus documents. Of great interest was whether such textbooks provided maximum exposure to appropriately levelled, high frequency English vocabulary (as found in important word lists such as the General English Service (West, 1953), the New General Service Word List (Browne, C., Culligan, B. & Phillips, J., 2013a), the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2001), and the New Academic Word List (Browne, C., Culligan, B. & Phillips, J., 2013b), since it is now commonly understood that these high frequency words are the words learners really need to know. They also wanted to ensure that their learners knew how best to go about learning these high priority words.

This author also believed it to be important for learners to have full confidence in the materials and teaching/learning methodologies employed in their courses, and to have a clear rationale for their use. In other words, language learners should know specifically *what* they need to know, *how* to go about learning it, and *why* it is important to know and do certain things when learning new vocabulary. It was also considered important that learners be aware that these "what, how and why" principles rest upon solid research findings, and that their implementation in the classroom was justified, especially when this required them, at times, to operate outside their comfort zone. This latter point was critical, since, if learners understood that the materials, activities and tasks, teaching methods, and assessment practices they were exposed to reflected a sound theoretical foundation, and that they had been carefully selected to promote their learning, this might motivate them to persevere when experiencing learning challenges.

Building this kind of confidence is pertinent within the author's university context, since for most Japanese learners there, the more student-centered approaches to teaching and

learning are often quite different from what they have encountered in senior highschool. Sometimes, it may be disquieting for learners who have previously experienced more teacher-centered approaches to be faced with new ways of doing things that at times appear to conflict with their previous experience and beliefs about "good" teaching/learning practice. Additionally, they also have to adapt to new, and sometimes pressing expectations that they should develop greater independent learning skills, build (and be able to articulate) stronger metacognitive awareness, and take more direct responsibility for their own learning in general. Developing a clear understanding that the changes they need to make in the way they learn, as well as in what they learn, are based on a sound foundation, and are not arbitrary or threatening foreign imports, is seen as an important means by which learners might make a more successful transition into the greater independence of university academic life.

While the focus of the initial collaborative research investigation described here was related to vocabulary learning, it was based on the understanding that vocabulary improvement would affect all skills, and progress in other courses, thus supporting learners' studies as a whole. We now know, from multiple studies, that strong vocabulary knowledge is an important key to language development overall. Michael Lewis, advocating for what he termed a 'lexical approach'' to language learning, claimed, 'Lexis is the core or heart of language' (Lewis, 1993. p. 89), and subsequent work, including that by Maera (1995) and Richards (2000) reiterates the claim that strong vocabulary knowledge drives linguistic communicative competence. Thus, we can surmise that strong vocabulary skills are also required for overall academic success, since the high-level linguistic demands of academic life transcend those of everyday use. In particular, a learner's skilled use (or lack

thereof) of vocabulary impacts heavily on the quality of their written academic products. Building a rich reservoir of vocabulary knowledge enables learners to more capably express their ideas, and thus supports improvement in the quality of all of their written assignments.

The writing task (for an example see Appendix 1), shows how the act of using new vocabulary in original productive writing tasks might be a stepping stone to other more complex writing. In other words, it provides a kind of intermediary, practice stage between learning that has a language focus, and learning that focuses on developing the competencies required in higher-level academic writing in the target language.

B) Identifying Important Principles

In their reading, the two teachers identified the following six principles that they considered to be most relevant to the intersection of vocabulary development, choices of course materials and learning activities (and their design), the quality of written academic products created by learners, and their overall English and academic development.

1. Task Involvement Load and Cognitive Effort

The work of Laufer and Hulstijn (2001a), building on the 'depth of processing' work by Craik and Lockhart (1972), and since corroborated by subsequent studies (Ellis & He (1999), Hulstijn & Laufer (2001), Folse (2006), Kim (2011), and Eckherth & Tavakoli (2012)), elaborated their 'Task-induced Involvement Load' (TIL) hypothesis,

operationalizing the constructs foundational to Craik and Lockhart's depth of processing concept. They indicated three key elements that are required for successful vocabulary acquisition - need, search and evaluation. In simple terms, to successfully acquire and retain vocabulary, learners must have an imperative to know a word (need). They should also have to put in a reasonable degree of effort to discover meaning for themselves (search). Finally, they need to make well-considered decisions about which word or word form is appropriate to use in any given context (evaluation). Thus, learners must expend considerable cognitive effort while learning a new word if they are to retain it long term.

2. *Writing: Output Opportunities and Time*

Other studies (Laufer, 2003; Huang, Eslami & Willson, 2012) indicate that word-focused writing tasks, in which target words are used, provide greater returns in terms of vocabulary acquisition, vis-à-vis learner time and effort. Huang, Eslami and Willson (2012, p. 552.) state, 'Language learners who spent more time in the output task gained more vocabulary than those who spent less time on task.' Additionally, writing output tasks are preferable to reading tasks on their own, which are more useful as a means to meeting and noticing new target words. Other studies, including those by Ellis & He (1999) and Browne (2003), show that learners need opportunities to output new words productively within the context of meaningful, longer, original discourse. In other words, it is important for learners to create extended chunks of language by writing complete sentences, paragraphs or compositions,

rather than completing less demanding tasks such as gap-fills, or matching words to meanings, Keating (2008).

Huang, Eslami & Willson (2012) demonstrated the benefits of composition writing over other shorter forms of written output. The creative act of using the target language in an original way, in longer texts, increases TIL and assists acquisition, since it fully employs need, search and evaluation. Huang et. al. (2012) also demonstrated that the amount of time taken on the output task has a significant impact on retention; the more time taken, the more likely the target words will be remembered.

3. *Frequency of Exposure to Target Vocabulary, Review and Contextualization*

Learners need to have frequent exposure to a new word before it is acquired (Eckherth & Tavakoli, 2012). The number of times a learner needs to meet a word before it is learned is still subject to debate, ranging from ten (Laufer and Nation, 2012), to anywhere from 6 to over 20, (Uchihara, Webb and Yanagisawa, 2019). Multiple opportunities to use new vocabulary are also important, as is spaced repetition involving meaning retrieval. (Nation 2001, p.p. 76-81) elaborates on a wide range of useful studies that amply demonstrate this.) Retrieval and review should continue over time, even as new words are acquired. It is also important that new words be met and used within a meaningful context as soon as possible, and not just learned in isolation, Nation (2001).

4. *Quantity of Focused Instruction*

Nation (2001) also indicates that a strong language program ought to devote a significant amount of time to focused vocabulary instruction, apart from personal study time, or time when learners build vocabulary incidentally (e.g. when doing extensive reading). In reality, however, it appears that many teachers and learners are not fully aware of just how important building vocabulary knowledge is, and so do not give this enough attention, focusing more on other aspects of the language (e.g. grammar). If vocabulary knowledge drives other aspects of language learning, as we now know, the common preoccupation with grammar instruction, at the expense of an adequate focus on vocabulary, appears unbalanced, and is thus of considerable concern.

5. *Enhancing Words to Support Noticing*

When presented in context, it is also helpful for words to be enhanced (e.g. in **bold type**, or <u>underlined</u>), since this promotes "noticing" and the possibility that learners will give attention to these words (Schmidt, 2001). It is important that learners know why words have been enhanced, so they know to pay more attention to these. Teachers should not assume learners will automatically realize they are important.

6. *The Importance of High Frequency Vocabulary*

Finally, learners need to focus on the right words (i.e. words that frequently occur in the target language) that are also appropriate to both their level of ability and their learning goals. Nation (2001, p. 16) reminds us that, 'high frequency words are so important that anything teachers and learners can do to make sure they are learned is worth doing', indicating that method, while important, is less important than actual exposure. Teachers should share high-frequency word lists with their learners, along with a clear rationale for their use (though the words still need to be contextualized). Drawing target word lists directly from reading texts that have been analyzed for word frequency, and that learners study intensively, is one way to ensure this, as is providing opportunities for their productive use of these words.

C: Conducting One's Own Background Research

With the intention of applying the principles described above to their own teaching practice, the next step for the two colleagues was to discover whether existing resources employed the TIL principles they had identified, thus promoting quality learning. Since no prior research had been conducted in this area, they set out to discover for themselves whether EFL/ESL textbooks in common use really do reflect what we now know learners need to know (by way of vocabulary), or do (by way of vocabulary learning tasks), and so they began investigating a representative sample of commercially produced EFL/ESL textbooks, published between 2004 and 2013.

Their goal was to ascertain the nature of the target vocabulary that was presented, whether this was clearly

identified, and whether the target vocabulary level matched the publishers' statements describing the textbook level. The frequency of appearance of the target vocabulary in the textbooks and the type of pre- and post-reading tasks intended to promote vocabulary learning were also analyzed, with the aim to discover the extent to which TIL theory was reflected in the way vocabulary and vocabulary related tasks were presented. In almost all cases, they found that the sampled textbooks failed to a) clearly identify target vocabulary, b) provide vocabulary matching the level of learner for whom the book was intended, and c) provide enough opportunities for learners to encounter the target vocabulary. (For the purposes of the study, this was fixed at at least six times.), d) provide learning tasks that activate the three TIL constructs, e) provide multiple opportunities for review, and f) enhance the target vocabulary in any way, thus increasing chances of noticing (Ruegg and Brown, 2019). Additionally, though this is still debated (since glosses may add to the possibility of noticing), the presence of target vocabulary glosses alongside reading texts, common in most of the textbooks, appeared to remove the search requirement from the vocabulary learning TIL. While helpful for learners' immediate comprehension, providing glosses of target vocabulary may be counter-productive in terms of the search effort required for long-term vocabulary retention.

Having identified important principles gleaned from research, and a need for improved teaching resources via their collaborative reading/research project, the first R of our RPRR example cycle is demonstrated. Moving to the P phase of our cycle, we may now consider the implication of these findings and their application to practice. The next section describes how the background reading and research project led to the development of a writing task that was intended to implement TIL principles in order to enhance vocabulary learning potential, which may also serve as a

useful stepping stone to improved academic writing in general.

The RPRR Cycle, Phase Two: Practice

In this phase, two important steps need to be taken. Firstly, having gathered information from current research and through this identified important teaching/learning principles, it is necessary to also identify areas in one's current pedagogical practices which need to be up-dated and improved. This involves thinking critically and honestly about what we are presently doing and formulating questions that will be useful in guiding our decision-making. In answering our questions, we might then be able to devise more manageable, practical and effective ways to implement those important principles into the classroom experiences of our students, thus enhancing their potential to learn.

A) Questioning

If they desire to apply new knowledge, research findings such as those described above naturally lead investigators to ask questions pertaining to their application. In our current example, such questions might include a) Do we continue to use commercial texts and tasks, even when we know they fail to provide appropriate vocabulary learning opportunities, or do we develop our own alternatives? b) If we choose the latter option, what should we be creating? and c) How do we know that what we have devised is better, and will it deliver the quality experiences and outcomes we desire? In the author's university context, course textbooks are not rigidly prescribed, so the decision about what to do was a simple one, as it was possible for her to create and use "home-grown" materials and learning tasks, including the

writing vocabulary production task (WVPT) described in the appendix below.

B) *Applying Knowledge from Research to the Classroom: The Writing Vocabulary Production Task in Use*

As a mechanism to implement vocabulary learning practices that reflected insights from current research, WVPTs similar to the one provided in the appendix, were designed for learners at all levels within the EAP/BE programs. These are now administered, in various permutations, across all four levels of AIU's academic reading skills' courses. Though these courses focus on developing academic reading skills and strategies, in effect they are also integrated skills courses to some extent, since all courses employ all four skills to a greater or lesser degree.

AIU learners' range of English ability, as measured by their TOEFL scores, runs from around 400 (for lower level learners) to over 550 (upper levels), with some learners having near-native speaking and listening proficiency levels, but weaker formal academic reading and writing skills. The vocabulary levels, themes and complexity of the WVPTs (which are used several times across each semester, with different vocabulary and topics each time) are tailored to each class level and reflect the content of the course reading texts. Thus, they can be modified for different learner levels, while retaining essential need, search and evaluation elements, demonstrating their flexibility and usefulness in different settings.

Before creating a WVPT the first step is to identify the vocabulary that learners in each course need to know. Learners in EAP Level One, for example, typically function within the first 2000 word level of the General Service Lists

(GSL and NGSL), (West, 1953; Browne et. al., 2013a), while learners at Level Two function mostly within the second 1000 GSL level and are introduced to some Academic Word List (AWL) words, (Coxhead, 2000; Browne et. al., 2013 b). Level Three learners and above focus mostly on AWL words, with some discipline specific words being introduced at the fourth, highest level (the BE ENG-101 course) in preparation for the English-medium content courses offered within AIU's wider Liberal Arts curriculum.

Relevant high frequency target vocabulary was identified by submitting the prescribed course reading texts to word frequency analysis using Cobb's Vocab Profiler tool, (Cobb, n.d.), after which a list of target AWL words was created for each text. Following that, a speaking vocabulary production task was created, which gave all learners a slightly controlled production opportunity, added to their vocabulary exposure, helped review the vocabulary in context, required original and extended language production, and the chance to demonstrate their knowledge of both the words, and (because it involved retelling) the content of the reading texts. (This is an in-class student-managed activity that takes place before the WVPT.)

Of more interest here, since our focus is on writing, is the WVPT itself. A model WVPT was introduced early in the semester as an in-class practice activity. Following that, the task became a repeating, independent homework task, with one WVPT assigned to each of the reading texts as they are introduced, along with its related list of target vocabulary. A variation of the WVPT, known as the Vocabulary Assessment Task (VAT), was also administered thrice during each BE course, under test conditions, for assessment purposes.

After completing each reading text, speaking task and the homework WVPTs, learners shared their work with each other in class. In pairs, they gave each other helpful feedback, commented on the contents of their peer's writing, and asked questions, naturally re-activating the vocabulary, in context, using their own original language. However, long before the speaking tasks and WVPTs were introduced, learners were informed about the principles underpinning successful vocabulary acquisition (as listed above). Thus, they had a clear rationale for what they had to learn and do, and could articulate this. This preparation took place early in the semester.

The WVPT tasks used at other levels of the EAP program follow a similar format to the one provided here, but are modified according to class level. In the example given here, the topic ideas came from the first reading text studied in the BE academic reading course. The learners had already completed their reading of the reading text, along with intensive reading follow-up activities, and discussed it in class, so the topic questions were easily understood. Learners had also previously been studying the list of high frequency words taken directly from the text.

Each semester, each class section completes around six WVPTs for homework, while learners in the BE course also complete three in-class VATs as formal assessment tasks. The homework tasks focus on themes related to one reading text only and a single list of words. These receive points for completion and written feedback from the teacher. The in-class VATs contribute towards a separate section of a learner's course grade, and test three-word lists covered to that point (three VAT's equal nine-word lists). Points are awarded for correct meaning of the target words, their correct spelling, the correct form of the word in its surrounding sentence, natural use (i.e. correct collocations),

and whether the writing adheres to the topic. Because the focus of the task is building vocabulary knowledge, only the target vocabulary is assessed. (Students do not lose points for incorrect grammar in other parts of their writing that does not impact on their use of the target words). They may use more target list words than the task requires them to, but they should highlight only the 15 target words they wish to be assessed. Thus, learners can freely choose the words they think they have used most effectively for assessment.

After completion, homework tasks are shared with peers in class, who comment on the quality of the writing, the use of the target words, and the content. Learners ask each other questions and discuss the task in depth, as another way to practice using the target vocabulary. Learners then submit their work and after teacher/peer feedback, review their writing in preparation for the in-class VATs and other course tasks. They are expected to recycle new vocabulary often, and to apply their knowledge to written assignments and presentations for other classes.

Over time, teachers may modify the WVPTs, introducing new topics, make changes to instructions, and of course create completely new tasks and word lists to reflect any new reading texts that are introduced. The initial analysis of reading texts, and the creation of lists and tasks, does require an investment of time on the part of teachers, but this burden can be shared by teachers who are delivering the same courses. The benefit is that once the tasks exist, they can be reused across semesters with each new intake of learners. The tasks can thus be introduced gradually as required, and the number of tasks will increase incrementally over time, creating a bank of recyclable resources for teachers to share.

The RPRR Cycle, Phase Three: Reflection

The next phase of the RPRR cycle, reflection, seeks to make a conscious connection between research (and the insight into learning principles this has provided) and the changes that have subsequently been implemented in classroom practice, and the quality of learner's experiences and learning outcomes. During this phase, teachers should gather data (for example, in the form of students' work, test results, and verbal or written feedback) for the purposes of analyzing and evaluating the efficacy of changes made during the practice phase.

A. Reflecting on the Nature of the WVPT and the Six Principles

In the specific RPRR example cycle described here, we can now reflect on the value of the WVPT, using the six principles gleaned from vocabulary acquisition research. This reflection phase is of considerable importance, since insights gained here will not only inform future action, they also indicate potential areas for further formal investigation. In fact, the WVPT employs the six principles gathered from the initial research well, demonstrating a successful transition from knowing to applying and opens up new possibilities for research. By way of demonstrating the connections that need to be made between the background reading/research phase and the practice phase, in this third phase of the RPRR cycle, and by way of providing an example, the author's reflections on the WVPT will now be outlined in detail.

1. Task Involvement Load and Cognitive Effort

The WVPT is clearly cognitively demanding (learners frequently make this claim themselves). Apart from the fact that task completion is a course requirement, it is a fortunate circumstance that AIU learners are, generally speaking, very motivated.

The university has a high standing in Japan, and entry is competitive. Thus, the caliber of learners is high, and their desire to succeed is apparent in a strong work ethic. This transfers into a general diligence in completing homework tasks. Most learners also express a desire to improve their vocabulary knowledge, since they are aware that this will aid academic success in all their courses. The WVPT tasks provide learners with a useful, challenging vehicle to achieve this goal, and learners generally perceive it as such.

While the tasks are course requirements, they also provide a strong TIL, with good opportunities for learners to develop and exercise their intrinsic *need* to know the vocabulary, since they are the ones making the decisions about what to write and which words to use. The *search* requirement is also met, since learners do not fully know all the target words in any of the lists and no definitions or glosses are provided, so learners must identify word meanings independently. Finally, the *evaluation* component is also present. Since the writing tasks are products of the learners' own creative and original language, learners must decide which words or forms of words they need to use in any given sentence. They also need to consider how the target words collocate with surrounding words. Therefore, the task-involvement load of the WVPT is high, indicating it is more likely to contribute towards acquisition and retention.

2. Writing: Output Opportunities and Time

Both the homework WVPTs and the VATs require around an hour to complete. In reality, some learners

take longer than that on the homework tasks, and are free to do so. The VATs, which are completed as class tests, are timed (an hour), but the time allowance is considered more than adequate considering the level of the students, and the task requirements.

Not only do the WVPTs and VATs provide learning, review and assessment opportunities, they also allow learners to experiment with the target words and practice their writing skills simultaneously. The expectation that learners' produce an extended piece of writing is consistent with studies mentioned earlier that the best quality vocabulary learning comes from using the target words in productive original output.

3. Frequency of Exposure to Target Vocabulary, Review and Contextualization

Learners first meet the target words in context, in their reading texts and also again in the word lists. They must then find the meanings, and perhaps re-read the reading text in order to complete other follow-up tasks and activities (e.g. comprehension and critical thinking questions, and group discussions). The speaking task offers the first chance to practice using the words, in context, in a semi-controlled way, while the WVPT provides another opportunity to use the target words in context. Both peer discussion and feedback, and the teacher's written feedback help learners to review their use of the words. Finally, the peer exchange allows learners to see how others have used the target words within the context of their writing. In this way,

learners have upwards of eight exposures to the target words, far more than would be the case if learners completed only textbook follow-up vocabulary tasks.

4. Quantity of Focused Instruction

The introduction of the WVPTs has increased the amount of class time devoted to vocabulary learning and teaching. At the start of each semester at least one whole class is devoted to activities designed to inform learners about the why, what and how of vocabulary learning. Learners are then able to articulate a rationale for each of these. Even when the WVPTs may be challenging (and learners acknowledge they are), they appear motivated to persevere because they know why they are important. Moreover, considerable personal study time is devoted to the tasks, which has also increased the amount of focused time learners spend on vocabulary learning. The written feedback from teachers is both detailed and individual, and time spent discussing vocabulary and using the tasks for vocabulary review has increased. Considering the importance of vocabulary knowledge to language acquisition in general, this increase is viewed positively.

5. Enhancing Words to Support Noticing

While the target words are not enhanced in the reading texts for the BE learners, learners in the lower level EAP classes do use reading texts containing target vocabulary enhancement. However, BE learners are also introduced to

annotation skills, which require them to highlight or underline the target vocabulary themselves. Learners must also enhance the target words in their WVPTs, thereby ensuring that they give attention to these words while reading texts and while writing. The enhanced words can be easily noticed again during peer sharing, or when reviewing their annotated reading texts and WVPTs. Lower level learners sometimes complete their WVPTs as an in-class activity and exchange it with a partner, who then finds and circles the target vocabulary, and once returned, each learner's WVPT, with target words now enhanced, is used for review, further increasing noticing (and focused attention) opportunities.

6. The Importance of High Frequency Vocabulary

All WVPTs use high frequency target words. At no time are learners expected to invest effort or time in learning words that are of a low priority. Learners are, therefore, confident that they are being asked to spend time and effort on words that really matter.

After revisiting the principles uncovered in the original reading and research and reflecting on whether these principles are at work in the WVPT, we can now see, in this example, that the aim to connect research classroom practice has been well met. However, the case does not rest there. Experimenting with the task has, over time, led to modifications, and learners appear to be benefiting from its use, but to determine this more precisely, we need to examine whether the WVPT demonstrably leads to improvements in learning outcomes.

B. Data Collection

As a first step towards discovering more specific details about the efficacy of the WVPT for vocabulary learning (and writing in general), it was helpful to reflect on what learners themselves said about the writing task. To this end, qualitative data, in the form of feedback comments were gathered from learners in the BE ENG-101 program, providing a means to gather insight into their perceptions of the task and its potential usefulness.

The comments were collected from learners in BE courses that were conducted over one academic year, from their reflective Learning Logs, which were submitted twice each semester. While it was not specifically required that they comment about the WVPTs or VATs, a number of learners did make statements about these tasks. Relevant anonymous comments also came from formal end-of-course evaluation documents, administered by the institution, which were shared with course teachers. The matters for general comment in the course evaluations are entirely up to the learners, and no feedback about the WVPTs or VATs is specifically solicited.

From the data, 68 comments pertaining to the WVPTs, VATs and vocabulary learning in general were identified. Comments came from 53 students across the seven classes, which averaged around 17 learners per class, and some learners offered more than one relevant comment. Comments were then categorized according to common themes that emerged from the written data.

From learners' perspectives, 12 important considerations arose…

1. The importance of actually using target words (not just building receptive knowledge), especially in writing.
2. The value of the WVPTs and VATs in general, as vehicles for vocabulary learning, especially for long-term retention, which were seen as superior to rote memorization of words and meanings.
3. The writing tasks provided for more frequent exposure to the target vocabulary.
4. The need to select target vocabulary which relates well to the writing theme and is appropriate for the specific sentences in which it is used (this reflects learners' awareness of the TIL 'evaluation' construct, but was also linked to the need for teachers to carefully decide which target words to use as required items when preparing VATs.)
5. The value of the WVPTs as a mechanism for review (content and vocabulary), in particular self-initiated, self-directed review giving greater learner autonomy).
6. The applicability of the WVPTs as a learning method to other AIU language courses.
7. The positive influence of the WVPTs on learning in other AIU content courses.
8. The value of WVPT feedback, the chance to check their use of target items (particularly collocations) and learn from their mistakes.
9. The challenging nature of the writing tasks, which were also described as purposeful (learners knew why they were using it), achievable (they felt

satisfied with their efforts, even though these were not always perfect), and more enjoyable than other less demanding vocabulary learning tasks they had previously done.

10. The WVPT demonstrated how to learn vocabulary effectively.
11. The WVPT gave learners more freedom to use the target vocabulary in the context of their own original use of language.
12. The realization of the importance of learning how to manipulate and use the words in different ways.

Because of the quantity of data and space restrictions here, specific examples are not given to support each point described above. However, the following comments provide readers with typical examples that indicate the overwhelmingly positive views learners appear to have formed of the WVPTs and VATs as valuable learning tools.

> " ...outputting the words… is important… for example, trying to use words frequently in an essay… helps to a large extent, students understand the appropriate use of the words and nurture their ability to use the words in a practical situation. As a learner… I think it is vital to apply the terms I learned, in my essay… because those practices aid me to develop my insight on words' collocation that is often considered one of the significant aspects of words English learners are likely to be struggling with understanding….if I try to use those new words in… an essay, I am able to develop my collocation skill simultaneously as well as understanding the meaning of the word… It is crucial for me… because that improves… my … writing skill in English."

> "Through these tasks, I realized that the most important thing ... is not just to memorize the words, but to use them … in contexts. The way to just read and memorize words are not effective for me to acquire word skills, because such words are only fixed in short-term memory. To fix words in long-term memory, it is essential for me to use them in writing."
>
> "In … ENG 101, I found it much easier to learn new words because we made several approaches to learning them, such as writing production… By taking these methods, I could learn new terms much more effectively and actually enjoyed studying them. Thus, these strategies… can be applied to my composition(s)...."
>
> "I think that the lesson and knowledge obtained in the ENG 101 course can be applied to my learning activities, mainly in world languages and linguistics courses. Since I will take French 2 next spring semester, I would like to keep applying the knowledge to my learning activities."

"I think I can apply the strategies that I learned in the ENG-101 class to… PHI-105… Throughout the ENG 101-class, I learned the strategies such (as) ... the vocabulary writing task to practice using vocabularies in an appropriate way. These… can be applied when it comes to writing an essay about philosophical theory… I can practice using vocabulary before using it in an essay."

"I am taking EAP 105... EAP writing... I failed the same course last semester due to my lack of vocabulary… In

> the course, I have to write an argumentative essay… I could apply what I obtained in this course, especially in the WVPT, to my writing course. (It) enabled me to deepen my vocabulary… I tended to repeat the same phrases, so (the) learning task was effective for increasing my vocabulary in writing."

All comments indicated that learners perceived that the approach to learning vocabulary and the writing tasks in particular had been of benefit. In fact, the only critical comments related to one specific aspect of the VAT, the requirement to use the five required words listed in the task instructions. Three learners commented that the five required vocabulary items in the VAT assessment task did not always fit easily with the set topic. However, this was seen as a challenge for them to overcome, rather than as detrimental to their learning.

> "...VAT tests are most memorable because they are the most difficult assignments throughout this course. It was hard for me to include all assigned vocabulary ... in my writing with a selected topic and limited time. However, **because of the toughness, the words listed on the VAT word lists now have a significant impression on my memory**, which helps me develop my vocabulary and read academic journals more easily and more deeply."

Interestingly, the bolded comment above (author enhanced) indicates this learner's understanding of the importance of the TIL. However, more importantly, this comment, along with the two others (not given here) that mentioned this issue, show that a modification needs to be made to future VATs, which is to ensure that the five target items learners are required to use in each VAT test are

selected more carefully, to ensure that they match the prescribed topic more naturally.

The RPRR Cycle, Phase Four: Research

The next phase of our RPRR cycle requires us to consider, in light of what we have learned through reflection and the data we have gleaned (including informal learner feedback), what we still need to know, and what possible future research could be useful.

A. Where to From Here?

From the learners' comments in our example, the WVPTs and VATs clearly appear to have value. This is consistent with studies into receptive vs. productive vocabulary tasks. Webb (2005, 33-52) states, 'Results showed that productive learning outperformed... receptive learning in promoting productive knowledge, especially when adequate time (e.g. homework time) for task completion is provided.' Zhong (2011, p. 122) supports this, stating, 'Productive vocabulary tasks can be the better choice than receptive tasks for home assignments because (they yield) better in more aspects of the vocabulary knowledge.' In light of this, and the positive feedback of AIU learners, one might hypothesize that the WVPTs and VATs too, being productive tasks, are likely to produce stronger learning outcomes than receptive vocabulary tasks. However, this has not yet been demonstrated in quantifiable terms. Further research may determine whether these tasks, specifically, provide better long-term vocabulary retention outcomes and improved EFL/academic writing skills than other productive writing tasks. This brings us to the final R of our example RPRR cycle.

B. Future Possibilities

Having reflected on the changes we make, teachers should next explore areas for possible follow-up research that have subsequently become apparent as a result of the changes that have been implemented, whether these were perceived to be successful or not, and why.

In relation to our example RPRR cycle, a range of quantitative studies could potentially investigate any number of areas. Suggestions here include an initial study, which could begin by comparing learning outcomes between learners who use the WVPTs and VATs and other similar learners enrolled in the same course, who do not. If significant differences appear, another study might then explore different groups of similar learners who use only one of either task on its own, and compare outcomes between the groups. Yet another study might investigate the effects of a combination of the two tasks against those of learners exposed to only one of the tasks. Likewise, the relative impact of these specific tasks, compared with other types of writing production tasks should be investigated. By pre- and post-testing the vocabulary knowledge of participating learners using reputable and reliable vocabulary assessment tools, it may then be possible to quantify the effects of each of these varying approaches and discover more about the specific merits of the WVPTs and VATs.

Similarly, the impact of the WVPTs and VATs on the quality of academic writing overall is yet to be demonstrated. While several learners did indicate that the tasks had helped them to develop their academic writing skills, just how this occurs (if indeed it really does, and is not simply learners' perceptions) remains to be discovered. It would be useful to track changes in learners' other academic writing products

over an academic year by investigating groups of students who used the WVPTs and VATs and compare the quality of their other writing assignments against those of learners who did not use these tasks. Such an investigation might first involve identifying specific instances of continued and improved use of the target vocabulary employed in writing assignments for other courses. Secondly, it would be interesting to note whether incremental change in the use of original content and/or use of increasingly complex grammatical and organizational structures can be cross-matched between the WVPTs and VATs and other academic writing, thus indicating the impact of the writing practice that these tasks provide (rather than the vocabulary development).

Investigations like these may help establish whether the WVPT and VAT tasks provide advantages over other types of productive writing tasks, and in what ways this might be the case. If it is found that these tasks are of significant comparative value, such findings, if disseminated widely, and if reflected in the learning tasks in commercial EFL/ESL resources, might provide learners with more time-efficient and effective ways of learning vocabulary that also have a more positive impact on the quality of other writing they produce. In discovering these further findings, our RPRR cycle has become complete, and we might now be ready to begin, yet another round of investigation and application, ever building on what has gone before. Of course, we may also prefer to take a break, and investigate a completely different area of interest. In either case, the RPRR model readily serves as a framework for our activities.

Conclusion

In the example provided here, we can now begin to see how the RPRR cycle might become a useful professional

tool for linking research and practice more quickly and effectively. Not only does it provide opportunities for teachers to make well-informed improvements to pedagogy that are based on current research, but it also offers a useful structure for further scholarly endeavor. The process also allows for self-directed professional development, since it facilitates broader and deeper knowledge in a relevant area of interest, which can lead to improvements in the quality of teaching and that of classroom learning experiences. The collaborative nature of the process, particularly in the initial reading/research stages, lessens the burden on the individual researcher, and uses precious time and effort efficiently. The process also provides for a sharing of knowledge and a pooling of expertise, and lastly, a manageable modus operandi by which tertiary teachers, in particular, can simultaneously fulfill their duties as educators, and their responsibilities to their institutions and their disciplines, as professional scholars.

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Appendix 1

Model Writing Vocabulary Production Task

Reading Text: "Principles of Verbal Messages"

Name_____
Class Section ____
Date _____

Use as many words from the word list as you can to write a paragraph about one of the topics below. (You must use a minimum of **at least 10** list words.)

As well as the words on the word list, you must also **use the five words listed here** in your writing (at least 15 words in total). You may use any correct form of the words and you may use a list word more than once. However, it will only be counted the first time you use it.

Words you must use: aspect commit distinct perceive specify

Before writing, spend about **5 - 8 minutes planning** what you want to write. Then, spend no more than one hour writing. Underline **or** highlight each of the list words you use, **the first time you use it**. Do not use more than two list words in the same sentence. Aim to write between 250 and 300 words.

Topic: Describe an experience you have had where a verbal misunderstanding occurred between yourself and another person (or people), owing to **ONE** of the following…

1. A difference in understanding over the connotation of a word
2. A conversation you had in which someone was either too direct or indirect and how that affected the other people involved
3. The message was too abstract and you didn't understand it
4. The people in the situation were too assertive, or not assertive enough, in the way they spoke

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Example. (312 words)

Last year, I began dating a girl I liked. At least, at the time, I thought we were dating. Though we lived on opposite sides of the city, and it was difficult to see each other, we called each other several times a week, we made plans to see each other, and we spoke to each other quite affectionately. We met up for coffee, or trips to the movies, when our schedules allowed. I distinctly remember telling her she was special to me, so I thought I had made my intentions towards her very explicit and clear. In fact, from early on, I felt quite committed to her and I thought she felt the same way. From my perspective, the relationship was exclusive, just her and me, at least, that is what I believed at the time. However, as time went by, I began to notice a certain reluctance, on her part, to stick to our arrangements. She kept putting off making specific plans, and seemed to be completely focused on her work to the exclusion of everything else. (At that time, she was a very busy financial analyst) More and more, I began to perceive a change in her attitude towards me. The themes of our conversations became less meaningful, and more superficial, and she seemed to use terms of affection very sparingly. Later, I found out she was already romantically involved with one of her workmates. (In fact

they were deeply in love and consequently, they have married!) In fact, when I found out she was seeing someone else, and asked her why she thought it was OK to be dating two people at the same time, she told me she didn't think we were 'dating' at all, and that we were 'just friends!' I guess her understanding of the connotation of the word 'dating' was completely different from mine.

Now, put your writing here…

I wrote about topic #___ Total number of list words: ___ Total number of all words ___

An Effective Content-Based EFL Writing Approach for Non-English Majors at a Japanese University

Jeffrey Stewart Morrow

Abstract

EFL writing approaches vary in the second language classroom; certain approaches work better in certain contexts than others. In deciding a writing approach with which to analyze a content-based essay written by 20 freshmen in the food and health department at a midsize public university in Southwest Japan, the author examined three approaches: EMI, CLIL, and CBI. CBI was chosen as the approach as it is theme-based, follows the content subject matter, and the outcomes focused on subject matter rather than the language used to generate it. Pre-writing, students were taught paragraph writing and were provided with health-related vocabulary words. An essay of 200 words was assigned to the students. Post-writing, results found that 70% of students had complete introductions and 80% had complete conclusions, while the average score was 84%.

Introduction

Generally, EFL writing in academic fields follows one or more of the following directions (Khonsari, 2005): patient-centered, in which students practice and produce functional and organizational patterns such as those found in comparison/contrast essays; functional, in which students are given structured patterns and are asked to produce writings to fit them (such as a persuasion essay); process-centered, where the students focus primarily on the process

of prewriting, drafting, and rewriting; and content based, in which the importance is placed on writing from background knowledge assimilated through lectures, readings, and self-study, therefore it is more suited to academic writing than other writing approaches.

Content-based writing helps students' writing from a creative standpoint. Jaelani (2017) found that CBI (content-based instruction) was more effective in teaching EFL wiring when explored from the learners' creativity as compared with problem-based learning (PBL). To examine creativity in one test students were given a topic and 20 minutes to describe, write, and present their writing. The papers were then tested for readability (ease of understanding and comprehension) after understanding and following a set of instructions. Results found that CBI was more effective as it focused on the conveying the subject matter rather than the language used to convey meaning as is what occurred in the PBL writing.

Writing itself is a process of planning, drafting, and editing, and requires much time, effort, and patience, and is thought to be the most demanding of the communicative aspects learned of second language learners and can indicate other factors such as success in academia (Graham and Harris, 2005, as cited in Marashi & Mirghafari, 2019). The aim behind academic writing is to share ideas and hypotheses through writing; some background material that is necessary to explore a given field may not be familiar with the students at hand. For this reason, the EFL teacher facilitating, especially in the ESP realm, such classes must be familiar with the content employed in the classroom. Problems may occur if the EFL facilitator is less knowledgeable than the students themselves regarding the subject matter as happens in some cases.

In the author's faculty at the university (Environmental & Symbiotic Sciences) non-English majors generally study required English for two years. These classes are generally communicative English classes in which the aim is to help students communicate with anyone about everyday topics in simple English. This being the case, the primary focus is on speaking and listening. However, through quite a few years of teaching non-English majors at this university, the author found that having access to more content-related material geared towards the students' majors greatly benefits them. Under the umbrella faculty of Environmental & Symbiotic Sciences, students are in one of three divisions: Food & Health Science, Green Architecture, and Environmental Resources. The Food and Health Science students must also pass the nationwide nutritionist certification examination, which contains an English element and as a result have two additional English classes during their year period. Because of this, it was felt that extra content material, taught in English, would benefit the food and health students. This content material is often taken from a wide variety of background information from which to create offshoot activities: watching videos and listening to podcasts for comprehension, discussing content questions in groups after briefly researching on the Internet, or researching a topic followed by an academic essay. These benefit the students in this faculty because if they enter graduate school and proceed to the PhD level, which many Food and Health students do, they must write and publish two articles in international journals in English anyway. In some cases, professors in various laboratories request that students write final theses also in English. For these reasons, English becomes an increasingly important skill in the science department, especially Food and Health.

To help students write in English yet who may lack the skills to do so, the author began to teach communicative

English classes with a content-based writing component for food and health students. One of the goals of this class was to help students create a formal opinion essay in English related to food and health content. This required the author to focus on a particular approach to content-based writing after investigating several approaches. A background of content-based approaches follows.

Background of Content-Based Writing Approaches

In the EFL classroom, there are several approaches to the teaching and learning of content-related material (Brown, 2016): EMI (English-medium instruction), CLIL (content and language integrated learning), and CBI (content-based instruction), all of which have similar characteristics but are thought to differ in some respects, and "a shared understanding of the sometimes-overlapping goals and outcomes of each approach has yet to emerge" (Brown, 2016, P.2).

EMI is taught primarily at the tertiary level and strives to focus on mastery of subject content, where the focus is not specifically on elevating students' English ability and where L2 learning can be incidental. In the EMI approach, subject knowledge is the main driver of the course, and these courses often are taught by experts in their field, where the learning focus is not necessarily language based, but rather, where language can be a tool of instruction.

CLIL, on the other hand, stems from bilingual programs in Canada and Britain, and is thought to be a bottom-up approach to language teaching, where both the topic subject matter and the language of instruction are given attention (Marsh, 2008, as cited in Brown & Bradford, 2016)). CLIL aims to elevate the four skills of English and

to strike a balance between comprehension and production of the target language through exposure to mainstream topics using the four C's of CLIL: content, communication, cognition, and culture (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 1010).

CBI has been used to refer to any subject that is taught in a second or foreign language, and contains three distinct models (Stryker, B. S. & Leaver, B. L. as cited in Marashi & Mirghafari, 2019): 1)sheltered learning, where subject matter learning is the intended outcome; 2) adjunct-CBI, where language classes are taught in parallel to subject-matter classes; and 3) theme-based CBI, where classes are taught by a language teacher but are based on themes from the subject matter areas.

In the EMI approach, the subject matter is the intended goal of learning and at times language learning can be incidental. In the author's situation, the subject matter is already well-known in Japanese, but learning the subject matter through English makes the English learning aspect quite important and therefore not incidental. It was clear that this method would not be appropriate for the students and this study.

While CLIL introduces many aspects into the content-based situation, it works well as an entire approach over a whole course curriculum. The students in this situation study many courses, and most of them are in Japanese; they have only two classes per week of English which is not a great amount of time to conduct content classes that intertwine the four skills of English. This approach, too, would not be appropriate in this particular situation.

The author has been conducting content-based classes for some time in other classes and universities in

speaking, listening and presentations, mostly in non-English major courses and curricula, and has created material and conducted activities that naturally followed the theme-based model of CBI, where a content topic or theme was the central point of the activity. Therefore, a theme-based model of CBI was determined to be appropriate and useful for this study. Further CBI explanation follows.

CBI is related to the teaching and learning of specific material needed for academic study in various subjects, ranging from science to computer technology to agriculture, and is an important framework for language instruction, not merely a "shell of language teaching" (Stoller, 2002). It was an offshoot of the immersive language learning style implemented in the French-Canadian community and has also since been used greatly in teaching EFL and ESL (Grabe & Stroller, 1997). It has also been used widely in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) where the aim is not necessarily using and learning English for English's sake but learning to convey some specific pieces of information in English in fields such as science, technology, or business. CBI can be incorporated into spoken lessons and task-based lessons and can be used within the ESP and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) approaches. For purpose of this paper, the focus will be on CBI in an academic writing context that was used in this study of an essay. Methods and materials follow.

Method and Materials

This study incorporated an opinion essay assigned to the Food & Health English class by the author entitled, Ways to Keep Fit and Healthy in Our Daily Lives, which is thematic, follows the students background of study, and offers an opportunity for students to share opinions on a topic they probably feel strongly about. The strata were a class of 20

freshmen students currently majoring in Food and Health Science from the author's mid-size public university in southwestern Japan. The class contains students of varying English ability. The course is in the second semester of the first year of general English classes.

Pre-writing, the students were taught basic English grammar mechanics and were also trained in compiling an effective paragraph-based composition, containing an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. They were also taught to write meaningful topic and concluding sentences, and to check for spelling and grammar mistakes. The students were also provided with a word list containing 50 commonly used and studied words and phrases important in health and nutrition, compiled by the author after self-study and in consultations with students themselves and faculty members. They were instructed to use the vocabulary in their writing as they saw fit. A word count of 200 words was instituted and the students were given one calendar week to finish the writing.

Post essay, the writings were graded and analyzed according to the following grading criteria. First, the essay analysis was stratified into two streams: 1) structure, verifying that the writing contains an introduction with a clear topic sentence, supporting sentences in the body of the essay, and a conclusion containing a clear concluding sentence; and 2) grammar, checking sentence and grammatical construction (plurals, subject-verb agreement, and spelling). Second, the essays were read critically in analysis, while considering the underlying message of the essay along with the two points listed above. In addition, vocabulary words taught prior were also counted and tabulated.

To concretely analyze the essays, the wordcounts were first checked from each essay. If they were below the word count, this was taken into consideration. Next, the introductions were examined to verify whether there was an introduction containing a clear topic sentence, also containing clear introductive opinions and ideas by the students. Supportive sentences in the body were read to check that ample support was given to the students' ideas on keeping fit and healthy. Finally, the conclusion was checked to verify if there was a full conclusion containing a concrete concluding sentence. These answers were coded for analysis thusly: if the introduction was complete, this was coded as (2), if there was a topic sentence only, this was coded as 'semi-complete' (1), and if no topic sentence could be found was coded as (0). The body of the essay and the conclusion were also coded in the same manner. The vocabulary words from the vocabulary list were also checked and tabulated, and a rate of usage was found for each essay and for the total number of words in the essay. The vocabulary words were tabulated in two ways: 1) the number of individual words used, and 2) the total number of words used, even if used multiple times. As for grammar, one point was taken for each grammar mistake in a straightforward fashion. The essay total percentage was 100.

Results

After tabulation, the results of the essay structure were compiled in Table 1. This data show that 14 students had complete introductions, while 5 had somewhat complete introductions, and 1 had an incomplete introduction; 10 students had a complete body with supporting sentences, while 10 had somewhat complete; 16 had complete conclusions, 3 had a somewhat complete, and 1 had an incomplete conclusion.

Table 1. Results of Essay Structure (N=20)

Response	Complete Introduction	Complete Body w/Support	Complete Conclusion
Yes	14	10	16
Somewhat	5	10	3
No	1	0	1

Source: Compiled from essay data, 2021.

Table 2 shows the results of the analysis of the word usage, including total number of words and the usage of vocabulary words from the word list. It was found that three students wrote under the 200-words required in the essay; the most words written were 236, while the least were 184. The total number of words in all the essays were 4,182. Table 2 also illustrates that the total vocabulary words used multiple times were 384; the most used vocabulary-list words per essay totaled 28 and the least totaled 11; the number of individual vocabulary words introduced in the essays were 160; the most used were 13 and the least were 4.

Table 2. Word Usage Per Essay

Total words	Words per essay		Scores		
	Most	Least	Highest	Lowest	
4,182	236	184	91%	73%	
Vocabulary frequency (individual)			Vocabulary frequency (total)		
Total	Highest	Lowest	Total	Highest	Lowest
160	13	4	384	28	11

Source: Compiled from essay data, 2021.

Table 3 offers the statistical results of the word analysis from the essays. The average word-count was 209, while the standard deviation was 13.37, the median was 207, and the mode was 201. Median (the central data point) and mode (that value that appear most often) are useful to verify whether the values are close to the mean (Table 3).

The average score was 84%, and the standard deviation was 4.72; the median score was 85, and the mode was 88, showing that the scores were relatively close to the mean. The highest score was 91% and lowest score was 73%.

The analysis showed that the students used the pre-taught vocabulary words at a rate of 9% for the total number used multiple times from the total words of 384. The standard deviation was 5.8; the median was 18.5 and the mode was 14. The total number of individual vocabulary words introduced in the essays were 160; the mean was 8, the SD was 3.7, while the median was 7 and the mode was 6. The usage rate was 4% for individual vocabulary introduced once.

Table 3. Statistical Results of Word Analysis

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Mode
Words per essay	209	13.4	207	201
Scores	84	4.71	85	88
Vocabulary use frequency (Individual)	8	2.7	7	6
Vocabulary use frequency (Total)	19	5.8	18.5	14

Source: Calculated from essay data, 2021.

Discussion

Although the students in this study were not English majors, they still learned to have a command of the structure of an academic essay and were able to incorporate food and health related vocabulary into their essays. The fact that 14 students (70%) had complete introductions with clear topic sentences, 10 (50%) had complete supporting bodies, and 16 (80%) had complete conclusions with a concluding sentence signified that they were quite aware of paragraph structure and could write sensible and concrete essays relating to keeping fit and healthy, although half need more work in writing effective supporting ideas.

In the analysis it was found that the highest wordcount per essay was 236 and the mean was 209, meaning that they took the time to construct their essays meaningfully. The highest individual vocabulary was 13 while the highest overall vocabulary usage wordcount was 28 showing that they didn't overly rely on vocabulary words from the list to take up more space in their essays but did use vocabulary words to strengthen their opinions. The median value of total vocabulary words used was around 19, bordering on 10% of the total words of the essay. This is an acceptable value and one the author sees as positive.

While the mean score seems low at 84, it should be kept in mind that these students are not English majors and have less English classes per week than their English-major counterparts. In this respect, the students learned to write cohesive opinion essays on a given topic. Albeit not pure academic articles, their works were still readable, contained pre-taught vocabulary words, were in paragraph form, and contained all the elements of a successful composition.

Conclusion

When conducting this study the author examined several approaches to content-based writing and found that CBI works extremely well in EFL academic writing situations, especially those with an ESP slant. Other approaches, such as EMI and CLIL, may work very well over a long-term, semester-wide curriculum, where all EFL teachers are following goals with similar characteristics, but CBI certainly has its place in short writing curricula, and works very well in an academic setting, especially in the non-English major classroom.

Although other approaches to content based EFL writing are certainly viable over course curricula, it was obvious that CBI was appropriate in the author's EFL situation, which is like an ESP course. CBI may be the approach of choice for other non-English major practitioners with similar backgrounds. For this reason, CBI deserves a second look within content-based writing classes in non-English major classrooms.

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Fostering the Development of Global Human Resources Through Collaborative Projects in Higher Education and Business

Marian Wang

Abstract

Japanese university students often prioritize extracurricular activities over studying because Japanese companies tend to hire recent graduates based on the brand name of the university upon entry rather than academic performance over four years of undergraduate studies (Matsushita, 2018; Nae, 2020). In fact, Japanese companies are known for hiring young undergraduate students who are said to be white cloths that can be easily dyed to the unique colors of the company culture (Nagano, 2014). Some Japanese companies, namely those that are more globally-oriented, have come to realize that they will not survive unless they recruit university students who are equipped with skills to become global human resources (GHRs) (Conrad & Meyer-Ohle, 2017; Ito & Kawazoe, 2015). In this study, Japanese university students, international students residing in Japan, and Taiwanese university students collaborated on an online project that culminated in business proposal presentation for a global Japanese company. Ten students filled out surveys about their learning experience after the project ended. A Japanese student, three international students, and a representative from the Japanese company participated in follow-up interviews. The surveys and interviews indicated that students were able develop their communication and research skills needed in the global marketplace. Their reflections showed that they would have benefited from guidance on time management and preparing business proposals.

Literature Review

Japanese higher education is at a crossroads (Yonezawa, 2007). While Japan's neighboring countries such as China have seen a rise in the global rankings of their universities, Japanese HEIs have experienced a subsequent decline (Askew, 2011; Yamada & Yamada, 2014; Yonezawa, 2007). Accordingly, Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has been implementing internationalization of higher education policies since the 1980s, with the intention of globalizing Japanese higher education institutions (HEIs). One policy has focused on increasing the number of international students who study at Japanese universities by offering more content courses taught in English (Ninomiya, Knight, & Watanabe, 2009). A more recent policy since 2013 has been aimed at transforming Japanese youth into global human resources (GHRs) who have foreign language skills, communication skills, an understanding of cultures based on a Japanese identity, and the drive to become global leaders by encouraging Japanese students to learn foreign languages (i.e., English) and study abroad (MEXT, 2015).

Despite MEXT's internationalization of higher education policies, higher education in Japan has remained roughly unchanged, where conventional practices emphasize entry into a prestigious university instead of graduating with skills such as 21st Century Skills (collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving) that could contribute to a knowledge economy founded on innovation and creativity (Kobayashi, 2021). Kivunja (2014) insists that learning experiences must be modified from the transmission paradigm omnipresent in HEIs to a transformative learning paradigm. "For us to be effective teachers in the 21st century requires that we make the pedagogical paradigm shift so that we change the way

we teach in order to be able to prepare our students, not simply to memorize content and to follow instructions given by others, but to develop skills that are in demand in the 21st century workplace; be able to think for themselves, solve problems, work in teams and lead others to success in the Knowledge Economy" (Kivunja, 2014, p. 89). Kivunja (2015) expands on his ideas by promoting 21st Century Super Skills (creativity, communication, critical thinking, and collaboration) for students who can use them at university, at work, and in their daily lives. Ishikawa (2021) also promulgates training to replace the antiquated point-of-entry system in Japanese higher education to point-of-exit skills development, notably four years of training in skills such as research to foster the emergence of GHRs. Ito and Kawazoe (2015) advocate giving Japanese students more opportunities to conduct research on industry needs so that there are practical ties between businesses and HEIs. Finally, Karagiannis and Yamanaka (2021) suggest that research be conducted with Japanese and non-Japanese researchers as research partners, given that most young Japanese scientists have never had the chance to work with anybody from overseas and have not been able to develop their English or research skills beyond the domestic sphere.

Another change needed outside of higher education is in the recruitment process of Japanese companies so that Japanese HEIs will have an incentive to prioritize the training of students. MEXT's policies have had little impact on universities as businesses are complicit in adhering to the status quo of globalization solely in rhetoric and not in practice. Japanese managers are said to prefer young (Japanese) undergraduate students who are compared to white cloths that can be dyed to the colors of the company culture (Nagano, 2014). Those who have their own ways of thinking and specializations may not be valued in a culture that rewards obedient and compliant employees who can be

shaped by Japanese practices and customs (Kobayashi, 2021). If Japanese businesses continue to prioritize the hiring of monocultural and monolingual generalists, they will not survive in a global economy that values GHRs who have global skills and innovative ideas (Conrad & Meyer-Ohle, 2017). Similarly, Japanese HEIs will lose their competitiveness in a global educational marketplace unless Japanese businesses and society set higher expectations for them to provide more than a brand name for their students.

All of the stakeholders—MEXT, Japanese HEIs, and businesses—are eschewing the elephant in the room of recruitment practices of Japanese companies that privilege non-global, submissive Japanese students (Kobayashi, 2021). Kobayashi (2021) criticizes Japan's internationalization of higher education policies that are aligned with the ethnocentric recruitment practices of Japanese companies—exclusive to non-globalized Japanese students or in some cases, international students who can act Japanese and abide by Japanese rules. Rhetorically, Japanese universities are striving to become globalized, compatible with the aims of globally-ranked universities around the world. Realistically, most university campuses remain Japanese entities with limited practical elements of globalization (Kobayashi, 2021) and have little motivation to change as long as traditional Japanese companies and MEXT continue to promote ethnocentric policies and practices.

Research Design

This is a qualitative study (Jansen, 2010) of fostering the development of GHRs through a collaborative project between academia and business. In this study, 10 students responded to an online survey on their learning at the end of the project. One Japanese student, three international

students, and a representative from the Japanese company participated in follow-up interviews that could provide meaning to their life experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

This project began in October 2020 and ended in March 2021. Due to the rapid spread of the novel *coronavirus* (*COVID*-19), all preparatory and final presentation activities were conducted online, using Facebook and Zoom. Out of the 18 students who participated in this project, nine Taiwanese students were from a top-ranked national university in Taipei, one undergraduate student was from Serbia and studying in Japan, three graduate students were from China and studying in Japan, and five undergraduate students were from Japan. The international students and Japanese students were enrolled at the same top-ranked national university in Kobe, Japan. As the students did not receive academic credit for this project, participation was voluntary. An alumnus from the Japanese university where the international students and Japanese students were enrolled at arranged for a human resource representative at his global Japanese company to talk about his company, evaluate the business proposal presentations, and give oral feedback to the students. The alumnus worked closely with two professors in Japan, a professor at the university in Taiwan, and a program manager at a learning center at the Taiwanese university. The main projects managers were the professor at the national university in Japan and the program manager at a center for teaching and learning development at the Taiwanese university The author of this paper, who teaches at a private university in Kobe, conducted an online workshop on qualitative research, watched the presentations, gave feedback to students at the end of the project, and conducted research.

This project consisted of three phases. The first phase was for the participants to form small groups and familiarize themselves with each other. There were five groups, each with three undergraduate students, comprised of Japanese students, international students, and Taiwanese students. The mixed grouping was intended to give students the opportunity to network with peers from different faculties and cultural backgrounds. The sixth group consisted of three international students from China, who were enrolled in a graduate program at the Japanese university. The second phase was for students to learn about qualitative research methods and the Japanese company. Students were also expected to research the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.) so that their business proposals included a common theme. In the final stage, students conducted qualitative research and prepared business proposals that were targeted to the objectives of the global Japanese company within the framework of SDGs. The business proposals were uploaded to Facebook so that professors, project managers, peers, and employees at the global company could watch and provide feedback on the business proposal presentations. The final session held in March of 2021 was dedicated to choosing the best business proposal and giving suggestions to all of the groups on how they could improve their business proposals.

At the end of the project, the students were asked if they would be willing to participate in semi-structured interviews when filling out an online survey about their learning in this project (see Appendix 1). One student from Japan, three graduate students from China and residing in Japan, and the alumnus now working at the global Japanese company agreed to be interviewed. All of the interviews (see Appendix 2) were conducted in English and lasted approximately 45 minutes, longer than the initially

anticipated 20-30 minutes. The responses from the surveys were used to prepare follow-up interview questions. As many of the participants had written that their goal was to improve their English, the interview questions also focused on the English learning experience of the participants. The interview with the alumnus at the global Japanese company lasted approximately 60 minutes (see Appendix 3) and was also conducted in English. The questions asked to the alumnus were deliberately open-ended, to encourage spontaneous dialogue and deeper reflection for each question. The alumnus, a Japanese male, was asked to be interviewed because he had graduated from the national university in Kobe, participated in cross-border projects involving students from Taiwan and Japan (Wang & Kihara, 2018), and was fluent in English.

The objective of the study was to investigate how universities and businesses could cooperate and provide global learning opportunities that will enhance students' practical skills.

The research questions were as follows:

(1) What skills did students acquire from completing this project?
(2) What skills did students want to build on?

Researcher Positionality

The researcher has worked closely with university students in Japan and Taiwan on cross-border debate projects (Wang & Kihara, 2018). Including business in cross-border projects was thought to close gaps that exist between Japanese HEIs and businesses regarding skills development, as discussed in the Literature Review. Her positive experience of working with students at a business school in Taiwan for five years meant that she was

enthusiastic about having Japanese students work with Taiwanese students, who in her opinion, tended to be less concerned about making mistakes and possessed a willingness to communicate (McCroskey, 1992; Yashima, 2002) with people from various backgrounds. Moreover, she thought that Japanese students would benefit from having a greater appreciation of World Englishes used by speakers around the world to counterbalance the policies of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education that embrace the English-speaking West (Tsuneyoshi, 2011). She chose qualitative research for this study because she wanted participants to bring their own perspectives into light to give meaning to various social issues at stake (Gray, 2014). As someone who has always advocated that stakeholders' voices in all echelons of society be heard, she has a penchant towards conducting research with a critical stance that encourages bottom-up change at the grassroots level.

Findings

Communication Skills

Some students found communicating online with group members rewarding. As a first-year Japanese student majoring in physics reflected, "I was very careful not to miss the information from teammates so that I could catch up with the discussion. When I wasn't able to clearly understand their talking, I asked them what they said repeatedly. It took a lot of time, but I feel that was very helpful to proceed to further discussion." This student learned the importance of clarifying when unsure about what was being communicated, a skill that could build on the critical thinking skills of EFL students (Fahim, Barjesteh, & Vaseghi, 2012). Moreover, he realized that clarifying to stay on top of communication was important for his team to proceed in completing tasks. Later, when interviewed, he mentioned that he decided to join this project because he

wanted to have more opportunities to communicate in English with people from various backgrounds and cultures. He hoped that by participating in this project, he could communicate with students from different faculties, year of study, and countries while learning how to use various online platforms. He felt that he did his best to work with his team members and was able to develop his communication skills.

Similarly, a Chinese graduate student majoring in business administration in Japan wrote that she learned the importance of teamwork and communication. "Teamwork is more important than anything when you are one of the team members; respect other people's idea yet still hold opinions of yourself; think actively." Negotiating meaning and sharing opinions with her group members helped her communicate effectively. Negotiation of meaning involves a cycle of input, output, and feedback that informs learners about how they could employ strategies when communication breakdowns occur (Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2011). Although her group did not experience communication breakdowns, in her interview, she reiterated how she learned how to work in a team, share ideas, and express her opinions actively through this project.

In contrast to the previously mentioned positive experiences, a third-year Japanese student majoring in business administration voiced his frustration when trying to communicate with his group members. "Sometimes, we couldn't communicate and understand each other. I estimate that it was caused by not only low skills of using English, but also amount of communications. Therefore, I must increase quantity of communication, and improve the quality of it." He felt responsible for his team's inability to submit the business proposal presentation on time due to a lack of communication in his group, not only in quality but also quantity.

An impediment to communicate for some Japanese and Taiwanese students may have been due to their shyness, as Japanese and Taiwanese students have the highest level of shyness in the world (Henderson & Zimbardo, 1998). Using English may have limited communication even more, despite Bashosh, Nejad, Rastegar, and Marzban's (2013) findings that foreign language proficiency and shyness are not necessarily correlated. Therefore, it can be implied that Japanese and Taiwanese students needed more opportunities to communicate and familiarize themselves with each other during the project so that they could overcome their shyness and learn how to communicate more effectively in teams. A third-year Japanese student majoring in business administration said that she "learned that conversations outside the project are really important in making better performance as a team." In other words, for students to work effectively in a group, she felt it was important to build personal connections with her group members. This step could have been implemented at the beginning of the project in the form of an online gathering dedicated to small talk and light discussions. In this way, the students could have overcome their shyness of working with other students they did not know and could only meet virtually.

Time Management Skills

Some students experienced problems with time management, which may have been because for many students, this was their first time conducing qualitative research, doing interviews, preparing a business proposal in English, and working online with students from diverse backgrounds and cultures. A third-year Taiwanese student majoring in foreign languages and literature noted that it was important to start early and make sure that everyone in the

team understood what to do. “Start earlier so that we have much more time to discuss for details. Sometimes while we are discussing, we might just keep discussing without checking everyone is on the same page. That’s what we can pay attention to for the next time.” A second-year Japanese student majoring in agricultural biology echoed the Taiwanese student’s concerns. “Because it’s a little too late to start our project. We didn’t work at all in the first week.” A Japanese third-year student majoring in business administration also wrote how time management posed a problem to his team. “We made a timeline to make a video proposal for my team. However, there are two mistakes. First, it was too late to make it. I made it after the first zoom meeting, February 21st. So, I had to make it earlier to finish our work until the deadline. Second, I couldn’t manage my teammate well after occurring delay. We were not able to improve our schedule after our delay.” Graduate students also felt their time management could have been better. A Chinese graduate student in Japan said that “better time management skills and maybe more knowledge about human resource or presentation could help my team to do better.” For most students getting started on the project was difficult, but once they got started, the groups worked together and submitted the business proposals on time; only one out of six groups failed to finish the business proposal.

Dalli’s (2014) study demonstrates that students with time management skills have a higher level of academic life satisfaction and academic achievement levels. In other words, having time management skills raises student motivation as well as performance. According to Sainz, Ferrero, and Ugidos (2019), time-management is a non-innate skill that should be taught to university students for them to be successful later in life. University students tend to prioritize short-term tasks and lack long-term time

management skills (Sainz et al., 2019). Thus, students in this study could have learned how to manage their time better while completing this project, possibly by emulating their peers with good time management skills or attending workshops on time management. The alumnus at the global Japanese company said that students needed to understand how this project would tie into their future so that they could see learning as more longitudinal. Longitudinal goals along with the management of short-term goals to achieve long-term outcomes could have been prioritized by students in this study.

Research Skills

Although some students found their time management skills lacking, most students were pleased with how they were able to improve their research skills. Students were expected to conduct background research on the Japanese global company and SDGs, gather and analyze primary data from interviews, and prepare a business proposal that was targeted to the company. They were given resources, watched presentations from the alumnus at the global company, and participated in a workshop on qualitative research.

The three Chinese graduate students joined this project because they knew that they needed to hone their research skills, as they anticipated working in academia in the future and presenting their research at international conferences. A Chinese graduate student said their proposal "presented the concrete steps, possible obstacles and solutions, and it also showed a timeline, which is more persuasive when you pitch a proposal to a company." Their group was chosen by the representative of the global Japanese company as the best business proposal presentation because they went beyond the basic requirements by conducting research on rival

companies and making comparisons across these companies and the Japanese global company. The graduate students mentioned that they would have appreciated having more time to do qualitative research, even if they were able to complete all the necessary research required. They also thought that they would have liked another chance to use the feedback they received from peers, professors, project managers, alumnus, and representative of the global company to improve their research and their business. In fact, several students said that they would have benefited more from this project if feedback were provided earlier when they were preparing their research and proposals rather than at the end of the project. The alumnus at the global company agreed that if students had received more feedback throughout the project, there would have been a constructive feedback cycle that would help students improve their research and proposals at all the stages of this project.

Some students felt that polishing their research skills could have been combined with learning how to prepare business proposals. The first-year Japanese student majoring in physics said that although he successfully conducted background research on the company to come up with an original idea for his group, his group's presentation should have included more details that would solve real-world issues for the global company. His group members researched the technical issues of electronic vehicles without providing details that could help move the proposal forward. "I learned how difficult it is to come up with the solution to real-world issue. I wanted to solve global issue in the first place, but with the limitation of (company), I wasn't able to connect the problem globally with (company)… Because our focus was very technical, I wasn't able to construct the prediction of cost, schedule, and impact. I focused on the background of the proposal, but I think it was not enough to persuade the (company)'s staff." The

student's reflection shows that in addition to research skills, students could have been given more guidance on how to prepare persuasive and informative business proposals.

Conclusion

The reflections from the students and an alumnus at the Japanese company illustrate that through collaboration, research, and problem solving—important elements of education in the 21st century (Care, Griffin, & McGraw, 2012) —students were able to build on their communication and research skills. Communication, especially online, was difficult for many students. However, students found that by clarifying, being active, and negotiating meaning, they could communicate with their peers. It was important for students to communicate early on in the project and establish solid relationships in order to complete this project. Starting early and sustaining their motivation was challenging for students who could neither manage their time nor meet deadlines. Qualitative research was a skill that many students had honed during this project. That being said, students could have received more guidance from peers, project managers, professors, and business persons, similar to what was provided at the end of the project, throughout the project. Suggestions from these students will be incorporated into future projects that bring HEIs and the business sector together to foster the development of GHRs who can contribute to a knowledge economy founded on creativity and innovation (Kobayashi, 2021).

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Appendix 1: Qualitative Interview Project (Survey Using Google Forms)

1. I give permission to (author) to collect data regarding feedback on this project and write articles based on the data she collects. I understand that my real name will not be revealed in any way and that I have the right to refuse that any of my data be distributed.
   a. Yes, I agree.
   b. No, I do not agree.
2. What is your full name in English (e.g., Takuya KIMURA)?
3. Where are you from?
4. Which university are you attending now?
5. Which year of university are you in now?
6. What is your major?
7. Which group were in for this project (A-F)?
8. What was your primary motivation for joining this project?
   a. Work with students from other countries
   b. Practice my English
   c. Learn about (company)
   d. Other ( )
9. How much time did you spend on this project from beginning to end?
   a. 1-3 hours
   b. 4-6 hours
   c. More than 6 hours
10. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your performance in this project (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest on the scale).
11. Why did you rate yourself as you did ?
12. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your TEAM's performance in this project (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest on the scale).
13. Why did you rate your team as you did ?

14. What do you think you did well to improve the performance of your team?
15. What do you think you can do better to improve the performance of your team when participating in projects like this next time?
16. What, if anything, did you learn from doing this project?
17. What do you think could be improved about this project for future participants? [Example: more instructions on how to prepare slides, more time to complete the slides, more feedback from professors, etc.]
18. Which group's presentation did you like the most? [Please do not choose your own group.]
19. Why did you choose this team's 👆 as the best presentation?
20. Did this project make you interested in working for (company)?
21. Why did you answer as you did 👆?
22. Would you be able to participate in a follow-up Zoom interview (about 20-30 minutes) in English/Japanese about your experience working on this project?
    a. Yes
    b. No

Appendix 2: Qualitative Interview Project (Interview)

Date:
Time:
Zoom Meeting ID:
Passcode:
Name of student:

Consent form:

I _____ (name) agree to be interviewed on (date) regarding the (project). I understand that the interview will be conducted on Zoom and will be recorded. After the interview, notes will be provided, and I will be able to check for accuracy. I understand that if there is any information I do not want to be published, I have the right to state so and that my real name will not be used in any research publications.

Interview Questions:

1. How many years have you been studying English?
2. What is your primary reason for studying English (or other languages)?
3. How do you like to study English? (e.g., I like to watch YouTube videos in English, especially TED talks videos.) Why do you prefer to study English in this way?
4. How do you imagine yourself using English in your future (career)?
5. Before starting this project, what did you imagine you would gain from participating in this project?
6. Some students indicated that they would have appreciated feedback from professors and Japanese company's staff earlier than at the final stage of this project. If you agree with this opinion, when and how do you think you would have liked to get feedback? If

you disagree with this opinion, please explain why.

7. What kind of feedback (from teachers, friends, colleagues, classmates, etc.) is most beneficial for you to improve (e.g., I prefer getting timely feedback)? Why?
8. In the future, we hope to have more projects that encourage cross-border learning (online or face-to-face or hybrid). What kind of project(s) would you suggest that would encourage students from diverse backgrounds to use English and also improve other skills (such as research, interviewing)?

Appendix 3: Qualitative Interview Project (Interview with Alumnus)

Date:
Time:
Zoom Meeting ID:
Passcode:
Name:

Consent form:

I _____ (name) agree to be interviewed on (date) regarding the (project). I understand that the interview will be conducted on Zoom and will be recorded. After the interview, notes will be provided, and I will be able to check for accuracy. I understand that if there is any information I do not want to be published, I have the right to state so and that my real name will not be used in any research publications.

Interview Questions:

1. What do you think went well in this project?
2. What do you think needs to be improved in this project?
3. What do you think students learned from doing this project?

Common Challenges of Online Classroom Management and Remedial Strategies

Yuichi Tagane

Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many academic institutions across the world have now faced unprecedented challenges. Among the most drastic of all is the sudden shift from face-to-face conventional teaching to online teaching. Because of this, substantial numbers of teachers have resorted to online platforms including, but not limited to, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, etc. Akita International University (AIU) was one of the first academic institutions in Japan to provide students with courses taught entirely online. Among all the existing online platforms, AIU decided to adopt Zoom, the most widely used video communication resource in the world, because of its ease of use and applicability in any class setting. Despite the popularity of using Zoom, however, the researcher found, over one semester of 15 weeks, that there were many classroom management problems that needed to be addressed. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to identify and explore possible classroom management issues that teachers will confront in offering online courses via Zoom. In addition, some practical suggestions for other teachers of how to deal with those challenges associated with online teaching will be discussed.

The Importance of Classroom Management

Of all roles and duties that teachers have, classroom management is probably among the most essential parts in helping class succeed. Evertson and Weinstein (2006)

defined classroom management as a wide variety of skills and techniques that teachers employ to keep students engaged academically as well as create a supportive learning environment that optimize students' social and moral development (p.4). Teaching is not just about creating lesson plans and giving a great amount of knowledge to students. In fact, many teachers have experienced that a paucity of proper classroom management can adversely influence teaching and the well-being of students. Marzano et al. (2003) insists that if there are no clear classroom management rules and policies for students' disruptive behavior or academic dishonesty, class is bound to become chaotic (p.1).

This is also true of online teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many teachers to change their teaching approach to online from traditional teaching. However, this sudden mandated shift has caused them to confront new challenges. For example, while some teachers can make use of educational technology at ease thanks to their own high level of digital competence, other teachers do not always feel confident about such ed tech tools, which has become an extra burden to their regular class preparations. This paper, therefore, will provide teachers with some practical tips to help them manage their distance learning classroom smoothly and keep students engaged in learning. Based on the conversations with many other teachers, I found that they have been facing similar difficulties when it comes to managing class. Some of the most popular classroom management challenges voiced by them are listed and possible remedies will be discussed. By grappling with what possible unexpected variables are in classroom management, class can be less disruptive and more manageable.

Use a group chat app in case of emergency

There are a number of unexpected factors which delay the start of online classes. For example, due to scheduled update installation, students need to restart their computers, which could last for more than 10 minutes and occur right before class time. In addition, due to unstable Internet connectivity, as is often the case with Wi-Fi connection, students are unable to have access to Zoom. That said, assuming that there are several students who may experience technical issues, it is an option for teachers to have students use group messaging apps such as Facebook, LINE, or WhatsApp via a smartphone or tablet in case of emergency contact. A possible benefit is that if one student's computer freezes due to a scheduled update, he or she can post a message on a group messaging app. Unlike the student telling the technical problem to the teacher via email, a group messaging app enables more people to be aware of the student's technical issue and notify the teacher of it.

Be flexible with students joining class via a smartphone or tablet

Choosing what device to be used for online class is one of the most crucial steps, as it acts as a substitute for students' presence. Zoom let's all users decide their preferred devices to join online class, ranging from a desktop and laptop to a tablet and smartphone. Some students may opt for a smartphone or tablet because of their ease of use and portability. It is important for teachers to be flexible, as not all students can afford to purchase a desktop, laptop, or equivalent level of high-end devices. At the same time, however, both teachers and students need to acknowledge that there are a number of limitations that Zoom mobile app

has, which hopefully can be solved in future updates. For example, Zoom has a chat function, allowing a host to attach files so that participants can download them. If students use a smartphone or tablet, however, they cannot enjoy this function, in which case students are required to let their teacher know the limitation in advance.

Encourage students to join class early

Another most common technical challenge that students may face is that even if students can have access to Zoom, their web camera and audio devices might not function properly. This issue frequently occurs because not all students possess the same online learning environments or are frequent computer users. Therefore, a possible remedy is to have students join 10-15 minutes before class starts. Not only does this allow them to check their web camera and audio devices, but also their early entry can nurture their informal connections with their classmates. For example, a host can encourage participants to log into the main room and let them make conversations to interact with each other. While not ideal for all students, this strategy can help students build new friendships and have a sense of belonging to class.

Encourage students to use nonverbal cues

For students, virtual learning can be an uncomfortable experience at first, as many of them do not know how to behave or respond correctly to their classmates' opinions or their teacher's questions in class. It is, therefore, the teacher's responsibility to teach what desirable behaviors and responses are. For example, teachers can encourage students to use nonverbal cues including head nods or thumbs up so that teachers will not see students' attention wandering. These cues are small and simple, but can help

teachers and students feel welcomed, thereby creating a positive classroom climate.

Assign roles to each group

Among many learning platforms, Breakout Rooms is one of the most distinctive features that Zoom possesses. It allows the meeting host to break the main session into smaller sessions so that students can interact with one another. This function is mainly employed when students are given an opportunity to have various types of active-learning activities, including group work and small group discussion. This function seems to solve the challenge of how students can do pair work; however, it does not necessarily bring teachers expected outcomes. In reality, many teachers often complain that there are several slack groups which do nothing but to chat with each other and come back to the main session room without any product at the end. It would be hectic and time-consuming for teachers to routinely jump into each small group to monitor students' progress, as it might take them approximately 5-10 seconds to visit one group and another 5-10 seconds used for visiting a different group. When it comes to teaching a large class of 50 or more students with more than 10 small groups, it is not the most practical way to visit each group and check students' progress. Rather, assigning roles to each group member (a reporter, an idea generator, a timekeeper, and a note taker, for example) rotationally would give each student a responsibility and equitable participation. As an added benefit, if teachers can create assigned groups randomly for each class, students will be able to have more opportunities to interact with different peers.

Follow three requirements to listen to the shared sound

Sharing screen function is another unique feature of Zoom. Many language teachers use this function not just to share some useful information with all the participants, also to carry out speaking and listening activities such as shadowing, dictogloss, and dictation. However, I have heard that many teachers were experiencing the same technical problem: only participants can hear the shared sound. To troubleshoot the issue, teachers are required to meet several requirements. Firstly, after clicking the arrow at the Share Screen button in the meeting controls, a host needs to select the "screen," but not "audio players" of all screen share options. Sharing audio players allows the computer sound to transmit to participants, but not to the host. If "screen" is shared, it means that the entire desktop can be shared, which lets both the host and participants listen to the shared sound. Secondly, after selecting the Share Screen button, a setting screen appears, and a host needs to check the small box "Share computer sound" setting at the left bottom of the screen. Lastly, even though the two previous conditions are met, a host needs to know that the audio does not work in the Bluetooth headset for this particular function. In this case, a host needs to use the AUX (wired) headset or the built-in speaker, which enables both the host and participants to listen to the shared sound.

Have students look at a web camera while they give a presentation

In many language courses, speaking classes in particular, student oral presentation can be one of the biggest tasks that students have. Delivering an oral presentation is demanding for students, as most of them never have the experience of having public speaking. In addition, there can be other types of psychological factors which would make oral presentation extremely uncomfortable for students, such as fear of making mistakes, fear of forgetting what to say, or

fear of going beyond the allotted time. In this case, students are tempted to use a script word for word for the whole presentation. In many face-to-face classes, however, if students keep reading a script during the entire presentation, not using notes as a reference only, it is likely that they will have negative consequences on their academic outcomes (for example, the teacher may give those students a lower score on one of the grade components: stage presence). Some teachers may even consider this type of behavior cheating. In online class, it is yet more challenging for teachers to monitor and recognize whether students read a script during the presentation. This is especially true when they use the "Presenter view" function on Microsoft PowerPoint. This function allows students to view the presentation slides with speaker notes on one screen at the same time, and only slides appear on the audience side. The possible strategy that teachers can use to avoid this type of behavior is to have students keep looking at the web camera while presenting, not at the screen. Students can look at the screen when they want to move on to the next slide.

Conclusion

Classroom management plays an essential role for the teacher to engage the students in learning. Online teaching is not an exception. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some academic institutions temporarily closed or many classes transitioned to an online format. This unprecedentedly abrupt shift has made teachers reconsider the way they manage their classes. As Marzano claimed, a well-managed classroom can create a supportive learning environment, whereby both teaching and learning can flourish (p.1). If the environment is not conducive to learning, the balance of good teaching and learning can diminish. While this teaching online is a new experience and can be a major obstacle to many teachers, it is important for teachers to

adjust themselves to this "new normal" teaching and learning environment.

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