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Patrick Dougherty, Editor

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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 11th 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:

Denver Beirne is a lecturer at Asia University, Tokyo. His interests include metaphor, corpus linguistics and materials development that focuses on CALL
and CLIL.

Margaret M. Lieb, Ed.D., a native of Ireland, has been a transnational educator for over 30 years. She has taught students of all ages and diverse backgrounds in Ireland, the United States, and Japan. She has taught and conducted research at several Japanese universities for 17 years. She has presented at international academic conferences across Asia including the Teachers Helping Teachers seminars in Vietnam, Laos, and the Philippines. She has published extensively in the field of English language teaching and her research interests include international and multicultural education, English language teaching, intercultural communication, sociolinguistics, and ethics in education.

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EXPANDING COLLABORATIVE PROJECT-BASED LEARNING PROJECTS ACROSS COURSES, TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS

Marian Wang
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ABSTRACT

Project-based learning (PBL) is student-centered learning in real-world contexts. PBL has often been connected to the acquisition of 21st century skills (Bell, 2010) that may include critical and creative thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, and global citizenship. In this qualitative study using evaluation research (Suchman, 1968), English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students from two Global Topics classes (n= 20) at a private university in Japan were asked to reflect on their learning over 15 weeks by completing an online survey that focused on the tasks at hand and challenges they had encountered throughout the semester. As the course was founded on PBL and project-based instruction (PBI), their reflections and the author's reflections from teaching the course with a team of three other teachers were analyzed in connection with Buck Institute for Education's (n.d.) seven essential elements of PBL design—problem solving, inquiry, authenticity, student voice and choice, reflection, critique and revision, and public product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Project-based learning (PBL) practices has been prevalent in educational contexts for several decades. The origin of PBL is often attributed to the American philosopher John Dewey (1897), who believed that teachers should facilitate students to become functioning members of society and community by

"learning by doing." McMaster University in Canada was the first to use PBL in its medical program in 1969 (Servant-Miklos, Norman, & Schmidt, 2019), and since then PBL has spread beyond medical programs and even into Japanese higher education English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts such as short-term intensive English programs (Foss et al., 2008). According to Barrs (2020), PBL can encourage Japanese university students to think more critically about the use of English not only in connection with their own goals of learning English but also as sociolinguists who are able to investigate the role English plays in Japanese society. In Barrs' (2020) study, his students acted as researchers who came up with relevant research topics and questions for their graduation theses by examining the unique English linguistic landscape in Japan. Kiyokawa (2019) posits that PBL can close the gaps that currently exist in Japanese universities of exploring content through foreign language learning and can motivate EFL students to feel more invested in their own English learning process. When PBL is used in EFL content courses, Kiyokawa (2019) asserts that students can have opportunities to explore real-world issues or topics and demonstrate their learning in the form of a final product using English. Her students who participated in the "Phone booth" project discovered that working together with their classmates helped them build 21st century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving, creativity, and communication. For many of her students, this was their first time to do PBL, and many reported that the project was enjoyable and that they would appreciate opportunities to do such projects again in the future.

Ford and Kluge (2015) describe the positive and negative outcomes of PBL as well as factors that EFL teachers in Japan

should take into consideration when adopting the use of PBL in their classroom. According to Ford and Kluge (2015), Japanese EFL learners may not be able to understand the overt benefits of PBL on their language learning if they are too busy accomplishing tasks such as research projects, writing reports, and giving presentations as is often the case in PBL. Moreover, as students became more invested in completing their projects, students working in monolingual environments such as in Japanese higher education contexts used Japanese instead of English to complete their tasks and projects (Eguchi & Eguchi, 2006). Therefore, PBL may be more successful in enhancing the use of English with multicultural student groups who do not share the same native language and as such, in Japanese higher EFL learning contexts, limitations of PBL should be understood prior to its implementation in EFL classrooms (Ford & Kluge, 2015).

Despite the ongoing challenges of implementing PBL in Japanese higher educational contexts, it is worthwhile to analyze PBL frameworks that may raise the possibility of its effective implementation. Buck Institute for Education's (n.d.) seven essential elements of PBL design—problem solving, inquiry, authenticity, student voice and choice, reflection, critique and revision, and public product—shows that PBL is process-driven and long-term oriented. Students begin with an authentic problem, pose questions about the problem, and engage in projects that ensure that they are key stakeholders throughout the entire process of inquiry. Unlike problem-based learning, which can be confused with project-based learning, in PBL there usually is not a specific answer to the question posed. Multiple answers are encouraged as students collaborate to find the best way to answer questions to real-world problems, and at the end of the project, students

communicate the results of their findings to a community of practice (CoP) beyond the classroom (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.; Tiantong & Siksen, 2013; Wenger, 1998). This inquiry-based form of learning of PBL aligns with Barrs' (2020) study of having students become active researchers within their learning contexts. When PBL students become critical researchers, they also engage in reflective practices (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.). Reflection occurs at various levels among peers, between the teacher and students, among teachers, and with community specialists. This reflective process should feed into an ongoing cycle of project development—an iterative process of changes that students make to create their final product.

In the end, it may not be easy for teachers to transition from traditional teaching practices to more student-centered teaching practices such as PBL, especially in Asian teaching contexts where students are accustomed to traditional teacher-fronted classrooms (Ford & Kluge, 2015). It goes without saying that projects can fail if they are not well-organized, groups do not work well together, and the final learning outcomes remain unclear (Foss et al., 2008). Moreover, even if PBL gold standards (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.) in project design and teaching practices are touted, if teachers do not possess skills such as coaching, managing, scaffolding, communicating, and assessing, they may not be able to implement PBL teaching practices effectively. Nonetheless, PBL does offer options to teachers and students who would like to combine their English teaching and learning with 21st century skills and connect English to real-world interests.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a qualitative study using evaluation research. Evaluation research focuses on asserting the value of worth of a social activity as opposed to evaluative research, which is restricted to using scientific methods and other techniques to prove a hypothesis (Suchman, 1968). Evaluation research is intended to solve problems as soon as possible to foster the organic development of programs and policies (Kothari, 2004). Buck Institute for Education's (n.d.) seven essential elements of PBL design was chosen as the framework for reference when evaluating the implementation of PBL in EFL classrooms and programs.

In this study, 20 EFL students from two Global Topics classes at a private university in Japan filled out an online survey (see Appendix 1) at the end of the 15-week term in July 2023. These second-year students were enrolled in an accelerated program for highly-motivated EFL students and elected to take this special Global Topics course that introduced elements of collaboration across all four classes. They were permitted to fill out the survey in English or Japanese. Out of 20 students, one student filled out the survey in Japanese. The students represented various faculties such as economics, humanities, business, and information systems. The number of female students (n=14) exceeded the number of male students (n=6).

The author taught a class with 15 students, and her coworker taught another course with five students. Over the term, her students and her coworker's students met to gather data, share data, and give PowerPoint and poster presentations. The author had been teaching the Global Topics course for several years, but team teaching with her coworker and two other teachers who also taught the Global Topics

course during the same time slot was a recent development in the program. The aim of this "new and improved" program was for all four teachers to collaborate and create a course where students not only benefited from working in class on projects but also across classes so that students could expand their CoP (Wenger, 1998) beyond the classroom. The teachers met in the beginning of the term to discuss how to organize the student conference at the end of the term, gather data from all four classes, and work together during the term. Throughout the term, all four teachers communicated on Microsoft TEAMS where they shared survey links from their class, asked questions, and clarified deadlines. The capstone project in weeks 13 and 14 was a student conference attended by students from all four classes and other student visitors who could get points added to their final score in their English classes if they attended this special event.

The objective of this study was to investigate how students (n=20) in the Global Topics courses and the author felt about implementing PBL within classes and across classes. The research questions were as follows:

(1) How did the students and the author feel about this pilot implementation of a collaborative course not only within classes but also across classes?
(2) What changes should be made to the program for future implementation?

FINDINGS

The findings from this study were situated within Buck Institute for Education's (n.d.) seven essential elements of PBL design.

1. **a challenging problem or question:** Problems and/or

questions are solved and answered.
2. **sustained inquiry:** Students continue to ask questions, find resources, and apply what they learned.
3. **authenticity:** Projects are connected to students' real world.
4. **student voice and choice:** Students drive the projects and have a voice.
5. **reflection:** Students and teachers reflect on progress, problems, and improvements.
6. **critique and revision:** Students give feedback and receive feedback throughout the entire learning process.
7. **public product:** Students publicly share what they have learned to an expanded CoP.

Identifying and Solving Problems

One of the 21st century skills that was emphasized in the Global Topics course was problem solving, which corresponds to Buck Institute for Education's (n.d.) first element of PBL design, solving a challenging problem or question. In the beginning of the project, the students brainstormed authentic topics that were connected to their real world (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.). Students in the author's class chose topics such as gender gap, food loss, garbage, education, and same-sex marriage. They were told to select their global research topic carefully because they would be examining the topic for the entire semester with the same group members.

Students moved from problem identification to problem solving when they were asked to think about what they already knew about the global topic, what they would like to know more about the topic, and what questions they had about the topic. The questions they formulated illustrated gaps in their

knowledge regarding the topic and assisted them in coming up with a research question that would guide their research project throughout the term. The research questions that student posed were the following:

1. Why is food loss an ongoing problem in many countries in the world?
2. Why do most countries not allow same sex marriage?
3. Why do some countries have strict garbage rules and others do not?
4. Why do some countries have compulsory education and others do not?
5. Why is the understanding of gender discrimination not as widespread as it should be?

The author instructed her Global Topics students to come up with a research question that would give them a chance to investigate why some global phenomenon existed in the world. A question that starts with why may prompt students to think of a variety of reasons that exist, reasons that they may not have ever deemed conceivable had they not conducted this research project. Students mentioned that having a research question that they needed to answer helped guide how they chose articles in English to read and summarize, formulate questions for their surveys, and frame their overall understanding of the global topic. Understandably, a general topic such as education may be difficult to research; however, if the focus is on compulsory education and access to education, students could conduct a comparative analysis between Japan's compulsory education system and other countries in the world. Although the global topic was decided by the students, the author chose to scaffold how students created their research question so that the

research questions posed were neither too broad nor too difficult to answer.

To find the answers to their research question, in line with Buck Institute for Education's (n.d.) second essential element of PBL design --sustained inquiry-- students conducted primary and secondary research. For their secondary research, students typed their research question into Internet search engines to find an article that would answer their research question. The author, as teacher-facilitator, stipulated that each student choose a different article from their group members so that their group's secondary research would be more comprehensive and extensive. She also asked the students to show the article to her before they began to summarize it because she wanted to verify if what was written in the article was reputable, comprehensible, and insightful.

Students mentioned that when they started to read online articles, it was difficult for them to understand the English because most of the articles they chose were not written with non-native speakers of English in mind. Moreover, they sometimes confused websites with articles, so the author had to inform students what should be considered an article that they could use for their literature review. Most students relied on translation software to understand the content of the articles they read in English. One of the problems that emerged when students wrote their summaries in English was plagiarism. Even though the teacher provided a template for students to use to write their summaries, most students copied and pasted the main ideas directly from the articles to write their summaries, without paraphrasing. Plagiarism of the main points of the articles hindered students' ability to think more deeply about their own reactions to the article. Consequently,

when they wrote their opinions and reactions at the end of the summary, students wrote general opinions that were not relevant to the arguments stated in the article they read. Thus, as for problem solving using secondary research, the overall learning objectives of being able to answer the group's research question using existing literature was not successfully achieved due to plagiarism and expressing of general opinions. In the future, the author should consider offering some more guidelines on how to paraphrase effectively and make specific arguments based on what was written in the article.

For primary research, students created online surveys using Microsoft FORMS that were filled out by students in all four of the Global Topics class. The author asked students to create a survey with ten questions that not only focused on their research topic but also their research question. An example of some questions from the survey on compulsory education are:

7. Do you think there are more countries with compulsory education or more countries that do not have compulsory education?
    a. more countries with compulsory education
    b. more countries without compulsory education
    c. same amount
8. Do you think it is necessary to have a compulsory education system?
    a. Yes
    b. So so
    c. No
9. If you don't have compulsory education system in Japan, would you study voluntarily?

a. Yes
b. No

When solving authentic problems, students understood that they needed to ask interesting questions that would provide insight into their research topic and question. Students commented that they found creating surveys enjoyable and were often surprised by some of the responses they got from their peers. One of the points that the author emphasized to her students was that the survey was not intended to test the knowledge of the students; in other words, the survey was not to be designed as a quiz or a test. Of course, some gaps in the knowledge of respondents would be interesting to analyze, but the overall objective of the primary research was for Global Topics students to ask a variety of questions that were organized logically, thoroughly, and thoughtfully. The online surveys revealed that students were able to ask questions that helped them answer their research question. Having shown sample surveys from students in other Global Topics classes and preparing a demonstration lesson on how to use Microsoft FORMS greatly facilitated the learning of how to create online surveys, analyze results, and interpret the results of their primary research. Students mentioned that even if all of their survey questions did not necessarily produce the most captivating results, they were able to ask at least four or five questions that led to responses that made them think more deeply about their global topic.

Student Voice and Collaboration

Once each student had chosen a global topic they were most interested in, the author grouped students according to the students' topic of interest and gender. Although she felt that this way of grouping was most suitable, a student remarked

that she would have preferred to have groups randomly selected with little concern for gender balance. In PBL, collaboration is essential for projects to move forward. Fortunately, in Japanese society, cooperation and teamwork are highly valued (Ford & Kluge, 2015), which increases the possibility that Japanese students are able to work well in groups irrespective of groupings. However, as the student pointed out, students should have a say in how they are grouped. PBL is a long-term process where students often stay in the same groups for an extended period of time. Thus, careful deliberation of grouping of students is necessary, and if possible, students should be able to voice how they would like to be grouped at the start of the project. The author felt that teachers of PBL should spend more time asking students about how they would prefer to be grouped—randomly or choosing their own group members. It was fortunate that the student who made this comment was able to work well with her group members, but it was also apparent that her comments hinted at her desire to work with other students.

Students mentioned that the course allowed them to expand on their 21st century skills such as leadership and collaboration (Kivunja, 2015). In each group, there was a group leader who was chosen by students or self-chosen, who made sure that group members were on task, assignments were posted on TEAMS by the deadline, and communication channels were always open. The leaders thought that dividing up the tasks within the group assisted in getting projects done by the deadline. They also mentioned that having time in class to complete projects was helpful. In the author's Global Topics class, none of the groups missed deadlines because she allocated about a third of class time for students to write their literature review, prepare surveys, analyze surveys, and

prepare presentations. Therefore, there were no complaints from her students about needing more time to finish tasks and projects. TEAMS was indispensable for collaboration and information-sharing for the students and the author. The author posted lesson plans and deadlines on TEAMS at least one week prior to the next class so that students who wanted to plan ahead could easily do so. Students said they often used TEAMS to check for information about the class and used the chat function to talk with their peers or ask their teacher questions about the course. On average, the author received about five questions a week about deadlines, tasks, and projects and responded to questions immediately because she knew that many students expected to get responses promptly. In the feedback from students, they mentioned that TEAMS made it easy to work with their classmates and the teacher and provided a clear platform where they could easily refer to examples of project work completed by other groups in the class. In other words, online collaboration platforms such as TEAMS greatly assisted in the ongoing collaborative learning process that was essential to PBL (Kiyokawa, 2019).

In PBL, students should have a say in what they create and how it is created. In the Global Topics course taught by the author, students were told what to create and how it should be created. Of course, there was some flexibility in how students accomplished each task, but the author felt that it was necessary to be more explicit as to what was to be expected from their final products. In short, the student voice that drives autonomous learning in PBL was not always present in the course. Although the author gave students flexibility in topic choice and how surveys were designed, she gave explicit guidelines as to how students should prepare their PowerPoint presentations. That being said, for the poster presentations at

the final conference, she allowed for more student autonomy and direction because she never had students do poster presentations in her Global Topics course before and wanted to see what they could do on their own. Moreover, because the poster presentation was intended to be more casual and suitable for spontaneous conversation, she thought that students did not have to be as organized as when giving their PowerPoint presentations to a more academic audience. Student feedback did not allude to any problems regarding having little say in what they created and how it was created. Ford and Kluge (2015) insist that teachers as facilitators should be able to gauge how much involvement and control should be exercised. In Asian educational contexts where more explicit and teacher-fronted classrooms may be expected, it may be necessary for teachers to provide more guidance than is usually required for PBL tasks and projects.

Public Products for an Expanded CoP

The Global Topics students publicly shared what they learned to an expanded CoP (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.) when they gave PowerPoint presentations to students in their class and another class in week 10 and 11 and poster presentations in week 13 and 14 to students from all four Global Topics courses and students in other EFL courses in a public space called the Global Zone. As previously mentioned, collaboration across classes was the most significant change in how Global Topics courses were taught in the past. The aim of the PowerPoint and poster presentations was for Global Topics students to be able to share their findings from their primary and secondary research to an expanded CoP. As students had filled out the surveys from all four Global Topics courses, they were familiar with the topics that would be covered in the presentations. Inviting students from other

courses to become part of a wider audience was beneficial for students to expand on their communication skills. The PowerPoint presentations were more formal and demanded that students prepare an extensive script in advance. After each presentation, the audience asked questions and gave feedback. In order to test the audience's listening comprehension, a teacher prepared an interactive multiple-choice quiz for students to answer regarding the content of each presentation. Students said that they enjoyed listening to presentations from other classes because they could see how other classes approached primary and second research differently from them.

Preparing posters with their group members gave students opportunities for active collaboration. In the author's Global Topics class, the students used colorful markers, stickers, construction paper, origami, pictures from newspapers and/or magazines, glue, tape, scissors, and slides from their PowerPoint presentations to prepare their posters. Although the students were shown samples of how to make poster presentations using PowerPoint, all of the students chose to prepare presentations using the pen-to-paper approach to poster presentations. Some groups pasted their PowerPoint slides onto their large poster paper and decorated their posters accordingly, whereas other groups drew their own pie charts without using much of the content from their PowerPoint presentations. The diverse approach to creating posters demonstrated that students felt that they were allowed to be more creative when preparing their posters. The author noticed that students were physically and verbally active when they were making poster presentations. They took pictures of their posters after they finished them, shared ideas and materials with other groups, helped other groups finish their

posters when they were running out of time, and made comments like “I think I am good at this” or “I really like this” when they were making posters. The author was surprised by such positive comments because she rarely heard Japanese students make such verbal statements about their own ability in EFL classroom settings. It may have been that preparing poster presentations gave some students the confidence they needed to feel that they had created a public product that was unique and special.

Many students complained that standing for 60 minutes and giving poster presentations in the Global Zone was physically exhausting. Nonetheless, they found the experience rewarding because they learned the importance of speaking English interactively with their audience, which “transforms the role of a learner from a passive listener to an active speaker, thus creating an active and purposeful learning environment” (Boggu & Singh, 2015, p. 204). They said that compared to PowerPoint presentations, poster presentations prompted them think on their feet, answer questions spontaneously, make more eye contact with the audience, use more gestures, and make a poster that was visually attractive to people who were attending the conference. The questions that they received as presenters or that they asked when they were the audience sparked mini discussions and debates during the conference. In their feedback, students said that their audience often provided insight into seeing how they could answer their research question from a different angle. They also stated that even though they were very nervous in the beginning because they had never given a poster presentation before, after having several groups visit their poster, they began to feel more comfortable with the overall atmosphere of giving poster presentations and if given a

chance, would like to give more poster presentations in the future.

Reflection and revision

Reflection and revision were embedded within PBL for this course. The reflective questions posed were based on Buck Institute for Education's (n.d.) fifth essential element of PBL design—reflection—where students and teachers reflect on progress, problems, and improvements. The author asked herself and her students: What was effective? What obstacles were encountered and how were they overcome? What changes should be made in the future? Answers to these questions indicated possible modifications that could be made for future Global Topics courses with PBL within classes and across classes.

Regarding effectiveness, as previously mentioned, problem solving, collaborating, and sharing research results to an expanded CoP were successfully achieved by students even if student voice was shown to be lacking in project design. Among teachers, there were obstacles that were encountered in the implementation of PBL in their class and across classes. First, although there was communication among all four teachers as to how projects would be designed, how data would be collected, and how presentations would be shared across classes, there was not enough communication about the details of what the capstone project in week 13 and 14 would actually involve. Teachers did not have clear guidelines as to how posters should be created until the very last minute, which meant that there was a lack of consistency across classes in poster design and content. Moreover, as the capstone project in the form of a student conference lasted the entire class period of 90 minutes, after visiting groups who

were giving poster presentations for 30-45 minutes, most students appeared idle or bored for the remaining class time after they had completed their worksheet where they wrote what they learned and the questions they asked to the presenters. Therefore, students said that there was a lot of time wasted when they were the audience. Moreover, some students who were presenters in week 13 chose to be absent for the sessions in week 14 or left after a short period of time because they realized that the poster presentations would not take the entire class period. Keeping students occupied during the entire class period was challenging for the teacher. In the future, the author would like to have the capstone project done in week 14, where student groups would be allotted about 45 minutes instead of 90 minutes for their poster presentation. In this way, students from all four Global Topics classes would be present for the capstone project, and there would be an extra week available for students to prepare their posters in class.

Another obstacle that teachers identified was their students using Japanese in class to complete their projects. Especially in classes where there were 15 or more students, it was difficult for teachers to enforce English as the language used for communication in class. Although none of the students wrote in their feedback that using Japanese in class was detrimental to their learning, it was apparent that the completion of tasks and projects were prioritized at the expense of communicating in English when working in their groups. Admittedly, there were times when the author imposed an English-only policy and her students did work in English, but she admits that an English-only policy was particularly difficult to enforce in PBL settings. Her observations were consistent with Eguchi and Eguchi's study

(2006) that monolingual students would end up using their native language instead of English to complete their projects in PBL. In the future, teachers who adopt PBL in Japanese classrooms may need to consider how to encourage monolingual Japanese learners to use English instead of Japanese to finish tasks and projects in class.

CONCLUSION

In this qualitative study using evaluation research, students built on their 21st century skills including problem solving, leadership, and reflective skills when working towards their public product for a wider CoP. Moreover, collaboration across classes was successfully achieved in data collection, data sharing, and presentations. Although one of Buck Institute for Education's essential element—student voice—was missing in how students formed groups and completed projects, the poster presentations gave students some opportunities to apply their creative skills for authentic purposes. There were some challenges in project design that should be taken into consideration for future implementation of PBL within and across EFL classes. Time management for the student conferences in week 13 and 14 should be improved so that students who were part of the audience could use their time more effectively during the entire class time. As for English use in the classroom, some teachers struggled with having students use English to complete tasks and projects in class, so it may be beneficial if more incentives were in place to encourage students to use more English in class. In this way, students would enhance not only on their 21st century skills but also their foreign language skills when working together on collaborative projects within and across EFL classes.

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Appendix 1: Online Survey Questions

1. What is your name? [Example: Takuya KIMURA]
2. What is your faculty?
3. Why are you learning English? [Multiple answers are okay.]
   a. to get credit
   b. to study abroad
   c. for fun (I enjoy it.)
   d. for my future job
   e. to pass tests (TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, etc.)
4. Why did you decide to take the PAGE's (English Intensive Program) Global Topics course?
5. Which part of learning about your global topic was most USEFUL to you? (choose one or none)
   a. finding articles and writing a summary in English
   b. creating a survey and analyzing results
   c. giving the PowerPoint presentation
   d. giving the Poster presentation in the Global Zone
   e. none
6. Why did you answer the way you did for question 5?
7. Which part of learning about your global topic was most DIFFICULT for you? (choose one or none)
   a. finding articles and writing a summary in English
   b. creating a survey and analyzing results
   c. giving the PowerPoint presentation
   d. giving the Poster presentation in the Global Zone
   e. none
8. Why did you answer the way you did for question 7?
9. In this class, you worked in the same group for about 12 weeks. What did you learn from working with your group? (Example: how to be a good leader, how to communicate, etc.)

10. If you were a group leader, what was most difficult about being the group leader? (If nothing was difficult for you as leader or if you were not the group leader, skip this question.)
11. In this class, we used Microsoft TEAMS a lot. What was useful about using TEAMS? (Multiple answers are okay.)
    a. Reading my classmates' postings
    b. Contacting my teacher (chat)
    c. Checking the lesson plan and homework
    d. Other
12. What did you learn, if anything, from watching other groups give their presentations?
13. What changes, if anything, do you think could be made to make this course/class better for students who choose to take this course.

CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING STUDENTS: PERSPECTIVES FROM JAPAN

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Teachers Helping Teachers

ABSTRACT

As English language teaching (ELT) has become a widespread global enterprise, there is a pressing need to examine challenges that inevitably arise when teaching English to non-English speaking students. This paper, written from the perspective of the Japanese ELT context, examines some challenges that may present themselves in ELT environments in general. After describing Japan's societal context, the author examines societal challenges, linguistic challenges, and cultural challenges to the teaching of English in Japan. Societal challenges identified include Japan's past economic success achieved without widespread English proficiency, the perceived lack of necessity of English in the daily lives of Japanese people, national identity issues, and the prevailing use of grammar-translation approaches. Linguistic challenges include the linguistic distance between English and Japanese in terms of grammatical systems, pragmatics, vocabularies, writing systems, and sentence structure. Cultural challenges include culture distance between English and Japanese and also between international teachers and Japanese students. After analyzing these challenges, the author offers recommendations for overcoming them. These recommendations are relevant to all contexts in which English is taught to non-English speaking students.

English language teaching (ELT) is now a widespread international enterprise as English has become the defacto international language for participation in the global community. Whenever English is taught to non-English speaking students, challenges inevitably arise. Therefore, ELT practitioners should become aware of these challenges so that they can anticipate student difficulties and provide optimal instruction for student empowerment. This paper, written from the Japanese ELT perspective, first describes efforts made by the Japanese Ministry of Education to enhance English proficiency with mediocre results. Next, the paper examines challenges of teaching English in Japan including societal challenges, linguistic challenges, and cultural challenges. Finally, the author offers recommendations for overcoming these challenges which are relevant not only for English language teaching in Japan, but for all contexts in which English is taught to non-English speaking students.

CONTEXT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN JAPAN

Investment in English language proficiency is growing across Asia as it is widely perceived as an essential driver of economic growth and international competitiveness (Muslimin, 2017, November 30). Japan is no exception, especially as it faces several societal challenges. Despite its meteoric rise since World War II as one of the world's largest economies, Japan is dealing with a declining population, a dropping birthrate, as well as an ageing population and pension crisis (Haswell, 2014). These challenges have increased awareness in Japan of the need to raise English language proficiency. Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has thus prioritized English proficiency as it is believed to expand individual

opportunities in terms of employment and career advancement and also increase Japan's competitiveness in a globalized world (MEXT, 2002; 2011). In short, the Ministry's goal is to produce "global human resources" (Torikai, 2018, July 3). Japanese businesses are also increasingly demanding "internationally minded" employees to increase Japan's international competitiveness (Mori, 2010). Furthermore, Honda decided to make English its "corporate lingua franca" (official language) in 2020 as a large portion of its sales are in the United States ("Honda," 2015, July 18). Other Japanese companies such as Uniqlo, Rakuten, and Bridgestone have followed suit by implementing English-only policies ("Honda," 2015, July 18).

Efforts to Improve English Proficiency

Given this context, it is no surprise that Japan's Ministry of Education has taken several steps to improve English proficiency. These include a 30% increase in English language classes in junior high schools, attempts to conduct high school English classes entirely in English, promoting participation in study abroad programs, and encouraging more efficient use of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) (MEXT, 2011). English has also been introduced as a formal school subject for 5th graders in elementary schools in a mandatory "foreign language activity" for 3rd graders (Aoki, 2016, September 5). Despite these efforts, it is estimated that less than 10% of the general Japanese population have professional working proficiency in English and less than 5% have business level conversation fluency (Lai, 2017, September 14). Furthermore, Japan ranks 38th out of 46 Asian countries in TOEIC scores (ETS, 2016b) and its TOEFL iBT scores are among the lowest in Asia (ETS, 2016a). On the English First Proficiency Index (EF EPI, 2017), Japan was

ranked 37th out of 80 countries and was classified as having "low proficiency" (although it should be acknowledged that the EF comprises English tests freely available online with a self-selection sampling method, so these scores may not necessarily be representative of each region).

Japanese teachers and students also struggle to achieve English language proficiency. According to Aoki (2017), MEXT (2011), Rivers (2011), and Sakamoto (2012), Japanese students achieve a mediocre level of English proficiency. A survey conducted by the Ministry of Education (MEXT) in December 2016 among 12,850 schools across Japan found that English language proficiency benchmarks set by MEXT were met by only 36.1% of junior high school graduates, 36.4% of high school graduates, 32% of junior high school teachers, and 62% of high school teachers. These disappointing numbers are inconsistent with Japan's overall educational achievement. For instance, 15 year olds in Japan score higher than students in other OECD countries in reading, mathematics, and science literacy on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2018). Similarly, 4th and 8th grade students in East Asian countries (including Japan) consistently lead the world in mathematics and science on the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA, 2018).

Japan's Increasing Diversity

Rising concern about low levels of English proficiency in Japan is also driven by awareness of Japan's increasing diversity and the need to facilitate communication in an increasingly multicultural society. The percentage of foreign-born residents has risen from 1.7% (2.2 million people) in 2017 (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2017) to 2.4% (3 million

people) in 2023 (Shiozaki, Tsuji, & Tazaki, July 26, 2023), with the largest ethnic groups being from China, Korea, the Philippines, and Brazil (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2017). The percentage of foreign-born residents is expected to rise to 10.2% by 2067 as the Japanese government is seeking to attract more foreign workers to Japan to achieve its economic growth targets (Shiozaki et al., July 26, 2023). Additionally, Japanese people are also being exposed to intercultural contact through other ethnic groups currently living in Japan such as immigrants from Latin America, South and Southeast Asia, and the Middle East (Befu, 2008). Intermarriages are also producing children who cross ethnic, national, and racial lines, further contributing to Japan's diversity (Befu, 2008). Classrooms across Japan are reflecting this diversity as many Japanese students take classes taught by international teachers including native English-speaking teachers (Tanabe & Mori, 2013) many of whom differ considerably from Japanese students in their cultural dimensions and value orientations (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). In effect, this means that "Sojourners, immigrants, and long-term residents alike, some 'looking' Japanese, some not, are now part of the fabric and life of Japanese society . . . [representing] about the same level of diversity as the United Kingdom in 1990" (Lie, 2001, as cited in Willis & Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008, p. 8).

CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN JAPAN

Based on the above context, this section examines challenges of teaching English to Japanese students at educational institutions in Japan. Three categories are identified and discussed: societal challenges, linguistic challenges, and cultural challenges.

Societal Challenges

The author has identified four societal challenges to the teaching of English in Japan. These are Japan's economic success, the lack of English use in daily life, national identity issues, and grammar-translation approaches.

Japan's Past Economic Success

As mentioned previously, Japan's meteoric rise after World War II to become one of the world's largest economies without widespread use of English has left many Japanese skeptical about the need for English proficiency. In some ways, Japan is "blinded by the light" (Black, 2014, p. 36) of its past successes. According to Margolis (2020), Japan still has "one of the lowest dependencies on foreign trade in the world . . . . and is light years away from requiring nationwide English fluency to keep the economy going" (para. 20). Understandably, this mindset influences the approaches of policymakers and stakeholders in their attitudes to English language education. However, a professor of language and culture at Nagoya University has said that to sustain its economic growth, Japan needs English. He stated that ". . . big businesses have found that the Japanese market alone is not able to sustain the growth in profits they desire. It follows that Japan needs English to do business with the rest of the world" (Morita, as cited in Margolis, 2020).

Not Necessary in Daily Life

Another (somewhat related) challenge to the teaching of English to Japanese students is that English is largely considered unnecessary in the daily lives of ordinary people. Unlike many "outer circle" countries in which English is an official language and is widely studied (Kachru, 1985), English is not an official language in Japan, and as mentioned previously, professional working proficiency in English has

been achieved by less than 10% of the general Japanese population and business level conversation fluency has been achieved by less than 5% (Lai, 2017, September 14). Low numbers of English speakers in Japan understandably lowers students' motivation to strive for English proficiency, but as Japan is becoming increasingly diverse, the need for English for cross-cultural communication will inevitably increase.

National Identity Issues

National identity issues also pose a challenge to the teaching of English to Japanese students. There is evidence of resistance to English language education among the Japanese public and many have opposed the teaching of English in elementary schools in particular (Sakamoto, 2012). Rivers (2011) has opined that this opposition is driven by the belief that English language education is a threat to Japanese language and culture and a strong desire to maintain Japanese national identity. There is also research indicating that certain discourses in Japanese society pose obstacles to Japan's entry into the global community of English users (Seilhamer, 2013). The first, *nihonjinron,* refers to a widespread belief in Japanese uniqueness and separateness from the rest of the world. The second, *kokusai,* has been described as a Japanese version of internationalization characterized more by nationalism than internationalization. It is highly likely that both of these discourses influence policymakers and educational stakeholders, and have a negative impact on motivation, "willingness to communicate," and "international posture" (Yashima, 2002).

Grammar-Translation Approaches

Many of the societal attitudes referenced above manifest themselves in approaches to teaching English in Japan,

particularly in grammar-translation approaches. It has been argued that English is not perceived as a "living" language in Japan, and this is likely due to the fact (mentioned previously) that English is largely considered unnecessary in the daily lives of ordinary people. As a result, teachers of English in Japan have lamented that English classes, especially in high schools, align with "strict correspondence to university entrance examinations" and are detrimental to students' pursuit of proficiency (Margolis, 2020, para. 12). These teachers have also argued that such exam-focused classes over emphasize grammar, translation, and boring memorization approaches and are detrimental to motivation. There is evidence in the academic literature to support these concerns. Krashen (1982) for example has argued that "victims of grammar-only type of instruction" (p. 19) over-rely on conscious learning and are less likely to achieve fluency. Similarly, Brown (2014) has asserted that grammar-translation over-relies on deductive reasoning and "does virtually nothing to enhance a student's communicative competence" (p. 16). Many Japanese junior high and high school students are therefore accustomed to teacher-centered, lecture-style English classes, with extensive drilling and memorizing (Cortazzi, as cited in Tanabe & Mori, 2013). Subsequently, when these students enter universities and take student-centered, communicative English classes from international teachers, they are often perceived as shy and reticent.

Linguistic Challenges

Linguistic distance between students' L1 and English pose challenges to the achievement of English proficiency in any ELT context. There is significant linguistic distance between Japanese and English which must be taken into consideration

when Japanese students study English. In this section the author discusses five linguistic challenges to the teaching of English in Japan. First, English and Japanese grammatical systems differ substantially. For example, Japanese does not have articles (*a, an, the*), makes very limited use of singular and plural forms of nouns, and often omits pronouns from sentences. These grammar points pose significant challenges to Japanese students in their quest to acquire English proficiency. Second, there are major differences in pragmatics (social language use) between English and Japanese. For example, Japanese makes considerable use of formulaic and ritualistic expressions that have no corresponding equivalents in English. Japanese is also a highly stratified language with a complex system of formal and informal language, with the expectation that different language forms are to be adhered to for in-groups and out-groups. This point will be revisited in the next section.

Margolis (2020) has also pointed out that Japanese and English differ considerably in their vocabularies, writing systems, and sentence structure. In terms of vocabularies, Japanese and English share very few cognates, unlike English and other European languages including French, German, Greek, and Latin. This lack of cognates makes it challenging for Japanese students to leverage word roots, prefixes, and suffixes which don't exist in Japanese. There are also large differences between the writing systems in English and Japanese. The standard script of the English language is the Roman alphabet which is also used by many languages in Europe. Japanese, on the other hand, is written using three distinct scripts: *kanji* (Chinese ideograph symbols), *hiragana* (phonetic alphabet for Japanese words), and *katakana* (phonetic alphabet for foreign loanwords). Finally, English

and Japanese sentence structure bear no resemblance to each other. While English uses the basic SVO (subject-verb-object) pattern, Japanese uses the SOV (subject-object-verb) pattern. Furthermore, Japanese uses particles to modify nouns, a grammatical component that does not exist in English. These differences in sentence structure are challenging for students and teachers especially in sentence mapping, as Japanese particles have no corresponding structures in English, and English articles have no corresponding structures in Japanese. In short, these five linguistic differences between English and Japanese pose significant challenges for Japanese students studying English.

Cultural Challenges

Cultural challenges are arguably the biggest obstacle for non-English speakers as they strive to achieve English language proficiency. This section focuses specifically on culture distance, a complex concept, but one with significant implications for English language teaching. Culture distance is evident between English and students' L1 (in this case, Japanese), and between international teachers and local students. A useful theoretical framework for the study of culture distance is Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. Developed in the 1970s, and replicated several times over the decades, Hofstede's theory identified six cultural dimensions that could explain differences in work-related values, behaviors, and beliefs. They are power distance (PDI), individualism / collectivism (IDV), masculinity / femininity (MAS), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), long-term orientation (LTO), and indulgence / restraint (IVR) (Hofstede et al., 2010). Hofstede (1986) has recommended this theoretical framework for the study of cross-cultural learning situations

and has suggested that each of these dimensions affect the way students approach learning and teachers approach teaching.

Culture Distance Between English and Japanese

In addition to the substantial linguistic differences between English and Japanese, culture distance between the two languages poses significant challenges for Japanese students in their quest to achieve English proficiency. The English language tends to reflect the values of individualist societies where it is spoken. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), in these societies, the individual is valued over the group, people have an "I" identity, and self-reliance and independence are valued. On the other hand, in collectivist societies, the group is valued over the individual, people have a "we" identity, and loyalty and reliance on groups are valued. These cultural differences manifest themselves in how people communicate in English and Japanese. For example, when introducing oneself in English, it is common to use one's first name, family name, and affiliation (company, school, etc.) in that order, reflecting the emphasis on the individual. However, in Japanese, introductions involve giving the affiliation first, followed by the family name, with the first name coming last, reflecting the emphasis on groups over the individual.

Another example of culture distance between English and Japanese is evident in the differences in power distance. Hofstede et al. (2010) have defined power distance as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations . . . accept that power is distributed unequally" (p. 61). In high power distant societies, everyone has a defined place and role, and polite language is used while in low power distant societies, there is a strong expectation of equality. Japanese is rooted in a high power distant, hierarchical,

stratified culture, and this is reflected in the use of *keigo* (respectful language). *Keigo* consists of *teineigo* (polite language used with people unfamiliar to the speaker); *sonkeigo* (used to show respect to people in a higher social status); and *kenjougo* (used to humble oneself in the presence of someone in a higher social status). While English makes some use of polite language, such sharp distinctions are not common in English. Instead casual language is common in English, and similar language is often used for people regardless of social status. This is because English is rooted in cultures that tend to be more egalitarian and are characterized by lower power distance.

Culture Distance Between Teachers and Students

Perhaps one of the most significant challenges in teaching English to non-English speakers is evident in culture distance between students and international teachers. This is an important consideration because, according to De Vita (2001) culture affects learning, especially how we perceive, organize, and process knowledge. De Vita (2001) has maintained that culture also affects our communication style, how we solve problems, how we create "mental categories," and how we connect old learning to new learning. In effect, culture affects "the preferences students have for thinking, relating to others, and particular types of classroom environments and experiences" (Grasha, 1990, p. 106). Consequently, there is a large body of research on cross-cultural learning environments. For example, Tapanes, Smith, and White (2009) found that when instructors and students came from different cultural environments, this can be disempowering to students. They also found that individualist ambiguity-tolerant students had more positive experiences than collectivist, ambiguity-intolerant students. It is important to note that this

study examined an online environment where the teachers were also characterized as individualist and ambiguity-tolerant, and were therefore culturally distant from collectivist, ambiguity-intolerant students.

In order to investigate how culture impacts teaching and learning, Parrish and Linder-VanBerschot (2010) developed the Cultural Dimensions of Learning Framework (CDLF). The rationale for the CDLF was the increasing number of cross-cultural learning environments and the need to provide culturally-sensitive and culturally adaptive instruction. The theoretical underpinnings for the CDLF came from social psychologists Geert Hofstede (2005), Richard Nisbett (2003), Robert Levine (1997), cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1983), and social theorist and cross-cultural communication consultant Richard D. Lewis (2006). The CDLF measures eight cultural learning preferences in three categories: social relationships, epistemological beliefs, and temporal perceptions (Parrish & Linder VanBerschot, 2010). Lieb (2022) used CDLF in a quantitative study to compare the cultural learning preferences of 119 Japanese students and 24 international teachers. The study found statistically significant differences in all categories, but practical significance was small. While this may have been due to limitations in the study, such as the instrument used and the reliance on self-reported data, the lack of conclusive findings underscores the inherent difficulty in conceptualizing and operationalizing culture distance and its impact on teaching English to non-English speaking students. Therefore, the findings of this study should not be interpreted as evidence that culture is not a factor in L2 learning. Instead, the role of culture in language learning is worthy of further, in-depth exploration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the challenges in teaching English to non-English speaking students, this section offers recommendations for anticipating and overcoming these challenges to provide optimal instruction for students. Societal challenges described in this paper include Japan's past economic success which was achieved without widespread English proficiency; the perceived lack of necessity of English in daily life in Japan; national identity issues, and the prevailing use of grammar-translation approaches. With this in mind, it behooves ELT practitioners to remind Japanese students of the need for English for continued economic success as well as the valuable contribution English can make in their lives, given the increasing diversity and multiculturalism in Japanese society. It is also important for ELT practitioners to validate students' own language and culture by taking an active interest in learning Japanese language and customs. Furthermore, ELT practitioners should explicitly impress upon students that English language teaching is not intended to replace their own language, but to provide them with a valuable tool that empowers them to engage with people from other cultural backgrounds and participate in the global community. In addition, ELT practitioners should strive to avoid the pitfalls of grammar-translation approaches by providing student-centered, communication-oriented instruction with the goal of increasing student motivation and enjoyment, and helping students embrace English as a living language.

As mentioned above, linguistic challenges of teaching English to non-English speaking students in Japan are primarily rooted in the linguistic distance between English and Japanese. Therefore, ELT practitioners should be familiar

with the differences in grammatical systems, pragmatics, vocabularies, writing systems, and sentence structure. Familiarity with this linguistic distance between English and Japanese gives practitioners a deeper insight into difficulties students may have and allows them to anticipate problems before they arise. This principle is applicable in all ELT contexts, especially those where the linguistic distance between students' L1 and English is large.

Finally, as mentioned previously, cultural challenges are arguably the biggest obstacle for non-English speaking students in their quest for English proficiency. Therefore, ELT practitioners should be familiar with the culture distance between students' L1 and English and also between students and international teachers. Awareness of cultural dimensions such as individualism / collectivism and power distance (Hofstede et al., 2010) and how they impact communication allows ELT practitioners to incorporate these concepts into their instruction. Equipping students with this knowledge helps them to achieve not only linguistic fluency but also cultural fluency, and is a necessary component of intercultural communication competence. In addition, when international teachers are aware of cultural distance between themselves and students, they become more effective at designing culturally-sensitive and culturally-adaptive instruction. For example, the use of groupwork and collaborative activities is especially suitable for Japanese students who have a collectivist background and focus more on a "we" identity than on an "I" identity.

CONCLUSION

This paper explored challenges of teaching English to non-English speaking students. Although the examples given are

rooted in the Japanese EFL context, the ideas presented here have relevance for any context in which non-English speaking students aspire to achieve English proficiency. Because education does not occur in a vacuum, ELT practitioners everywhere should be thoroughly familiar with the societal context in which they work, so that they can frame their instructional practices accordingly.

In this paper, considerable attention was given to the efforts made by the Japanese Ministry of Education to enhance English proficiency with mediocre results. The paper then focused on societal, linguistic, and cultural challenges to teaching English in Japan, all of which have implications for the approaches taken by ELT practitioners everywhere. Finally, the author offered recommendations for overcoming these challenges that are relevant to any ELT context. Awareness of potential challenges to teaching English to non-English speaking students allows ELT practitioners to anticipate and overcome these challenges and increase the chances of student success and empowerment.

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A METHOD FOR INTEGRATING MOVIES INTO THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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INTRODUCTION

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) courses teach subject content in a language other than the students' mother tongue. The intention is to give students language learning opportunities in real contexts. Thus, improving students' pragmatic competence through a high volume and variety of authentic input (Fajardo Dack, Argudo & Abad, 2020; Marsh, 2002). This paper describes the use of movies in a CLIL course that aimed to give students a realistic insight into British subcultures through authentic materials. Novels, newspapers, magazine articles, documentaries, and websites were each used to fulfil different aspects of this role. However, as observed by Herron & Hanley (2008) and Seferoğlu (2008), movies are able to provide students with a visceral depiction of individuals' lived experience through the language, communicative styles and social context of interactions.

While authenticity and the contextual use of dialect were essential components of this course, so too were the practice and improvement of students' L2 communication skills. Here, movies have also been shown to have numerous positive attributes to aid learners' development. If managed carefully, students can improve their general communication skills by building vocabulary and practising critical thinking through discussions using targeted questions (Khan, 2015; Mirvan, 2013; Soh & Kaur, 2007). Furthermore, one study found that students were able to increase their pragmatic

competence; by observing video interactions in the target language, learners were able to understand how to initiate utterances, expand interactions and interpret meaning through non-verbal cues (Kabooha, 2016). There are numerous additional benefits, such as improvements in listening ability (Hayati & Mohmedi, 2011; Kaiser, 2011), writing skills (Baratta & Jones, 2008; Kasper, 2002) and motivation (Bray, 2019; Zhang 2013). Therefore, movies can be engaging and effective resources across the entire spectrum of language learning courses.

Nonetheless, movies can be difficult for learners to digest, as they contain colloquial expressions, slang and highly context-dependent utterances, which can all be delivered at rapid pace. Therefore, if the benefits of movies are to be exploited, the teacher should deploy activities that targets limited areas of the content; thus, allowing learners to process the language in an organised manner that does not overwhelm them with a mass of sensory information (Curtis 2007; Goctu, 2017; Ismaili, 2013). In line with these findings, this paper will now describe a series of activities that can be used to aid students to understand and enjoy movies in English while extracting valuable vocabulary and communicative lessons from films' contents.

PURPOSE

This aim of this article is to describe a method of integrating movies into the curriculum of language classes in a way that practices all four language skills and helps learners engage with movie content. This method was implemented in a CLIL class on British Youth Culture for classes of 25-30 third- and fourth-year university students of pre-intermediate to intermediate level (from TOEFL ITP 480/iBT 54 or CEFR

B1). The class met for two 90-minute lessons each week. All the students used iPads and had access to Wi-Fi. These techniques were applied with five different classes over five years, using multiple movies, until the course was discontented due to the author moving institutions.

PROCEDURE

The basic process consisted of the following six steps, which took four to five 90-minute classes.

1. Lesson 0: Movie Vocabulary – Students learn before lesson 1
2. Lesson 1: Movie Background Information – Teacher presentation / Student activities
3. Lesson 2: Background Research - Students research issues connected to the movie
4. Lesson 3: Presentations & Summaries - Student presentations / Review summaries
5. Lesson 4: Watch the Movie (with subtitles)
6. Lesson 5: Students Review the Movie (discussion, written review or video review)

Lesson 0: Movie Vocabulary

Students were given a vocabulary list of terms from the movie. In constructing the list, it was critical to strike the right balance between comprehensiveness and learnability. As one might imagine, the number of new terms a learner might need for a complete understanding of an English language movie might be vast. Thus, the decision was taken that students need to be able to follow the conversations and events generally, but not to understand every word or phrase in the movie. Therefore, a focus on the most essential, consequential or striking language was most effective. Nevertheless, occasionally, it might be inevitable that the list of terms an instructor would want the

students to learn could be extensive. In that case, it would be beneficial to split the vocabulary into multiple lists and allow more time for students to learn the terms. A maximum of 30 terms was deemed a reasonable upper limit for a list so not to overburden students.

Learners studied the vocabulary using the application Quizlet. The software has several learning modes that students can use autonomously and some games that can be employed for warm-up activities in class to compound memorisation. The students were given the homework task of learning the lists one lesson before they began studying the movie in earnest. Then, the learners played their first Quizlet game with the vocabulary set in Lesson 1. Learners were then tested on the vocabulary items just before they watched the movie, using the in-built test in Quizlet.

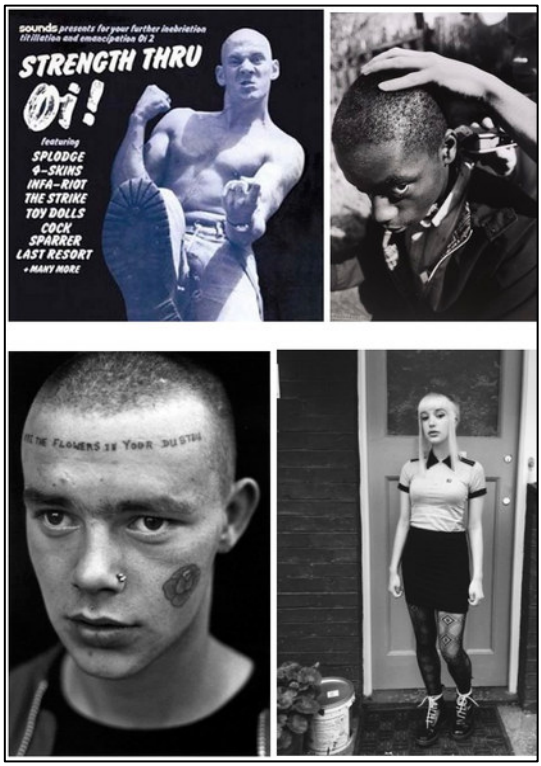
Lesson 1: Background Information

In the first lesson, after students warmed up with a vocabulary game from Quizlet, the rest of the time was devoted to giving learners context for the movie content. In the example to be discussed in this paper, the topic was the skinhead subculture. The phenomenon emerged from working-class districts of the UK in the late 1960s but enjoyed a resurgence during the 1980s, eventually leading to its global spread and variety of reinterpretations. The movie chosen to represent this subculture was *This is England* (Meadows, 2006), which focuses on the 1980s phase of skinhead and the complex social conditions in UK society that influenced the development of the phenomenon.

I introduced the topic by asking students to consider some striking images of these 1980s skinheads. The learners

were allocated to groups of four and given one picture for each group (some examples are depicted in Figure 1). The instructor then asked the students to imagine the person's age, job, background/class, personality/character and aspirations. The students first discussed each feature and then wrote two or three sentences about each item. A group leader gave feedback to the class while the instructor asked questions, added explanations, and took notes on the board to summarise key ideas.

Figure 1
Examples of pictures used to introduce 80s skinheads



I then reviewed the students' ideas to lead into a teacher presentation on the topic. The slides used pictures and

video rather than text to allow students to experience authentic texts and artefacts for themselves. The presentation was interspersed with activities, such as a quiz and a discussion on the music of the subculture.

The lecture introduced students to the skinhead subculture, but Meadows' film embedded learners in the complexities and contradictions of the skinhead movement in a more immersive manner. However, the film is challenging not only in terms of content and language but also requires some understanding of the historical context. Learners could then appreciate the full emotional impact of the movie and extract the more educational value from its contents. Thus, students next began to learn about the significant issues within UK society that the film references. The class was divided into groups of three members, and each team was given a topic to research. In a typical class of 27-30 members, that meant nine or ten topics in total. The topics were chosen by the instructor. It could be possible, with more time, to allow students to brainstorm their own research categories. However, in this instance, there were certain key points that the students might miss without this structured approach. The research topics and instructions are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Instructions for group presentations on societal effects that influenced the topic of the movie

80s Britain and The Skinheads

- Denver will put you into a group.
- Your task will be to research the topic you're assigned.
- Make a group presentation to explain the basics of your topic to the class.
- The presentation will be the class after next (**xxx**)
- You will have one class period plus homework time to prepare your presentation.
- Orgainise, coordinate and manage your research amongst yourself so that you all do an **equal amount of work.**
- Don't forget to discuss how you will keep in contact outside of class time (LINE, Zoom, email) and exchange your contact details during this lesson.
- In the XXXXX Folder, each group has a Google Doc (for research notes) and a blank Google slide for your Presentation
- First write your names in the Google Slide and then start your research.
- Work out before the presentation day the order each member will speak.
- Each member must speak in the presentation.
- The presentation should be about 5 minutes.
- The presentation will not be graded. You can use notes. The purpose is to share the information you found and learn together about skinheads.

Research Topics

1. UK Immigration in the 60s and 70s
2. Racism in 80s UK
3. Violence Against Indian and Pakistani People in 80s UK
4. The National Front
5. The Anti Nazi League
6. Race Riots of 1981 (Brixton, Handsworth, Toxteth)
7. The Conservative Party and Thatcher
8. 80s (Youth) Unemployment and Welfare Benefits (The Dole)
9. The Falklands War
10. Skinheads Today (Around the World)

I created a blank *Google Document* for each group to make notes together with a *Google Slides* template for their presentations and distributed these through *Google Classroom*. The *Google Suite* was chosen as it makes collaboration extremely convenient and intuitive, with the capacity for numerous users to edit files simultaneously.

Additionally, the use of teacher-created templates meant that all the files were situated in the same location, which made the research and presentation process much smoother. At the end of this session, students were tasked with collecting research information in their notes document as a homework assignment ready for the next lesson when they would prepare their presentations.

Lesson 2: Background Research

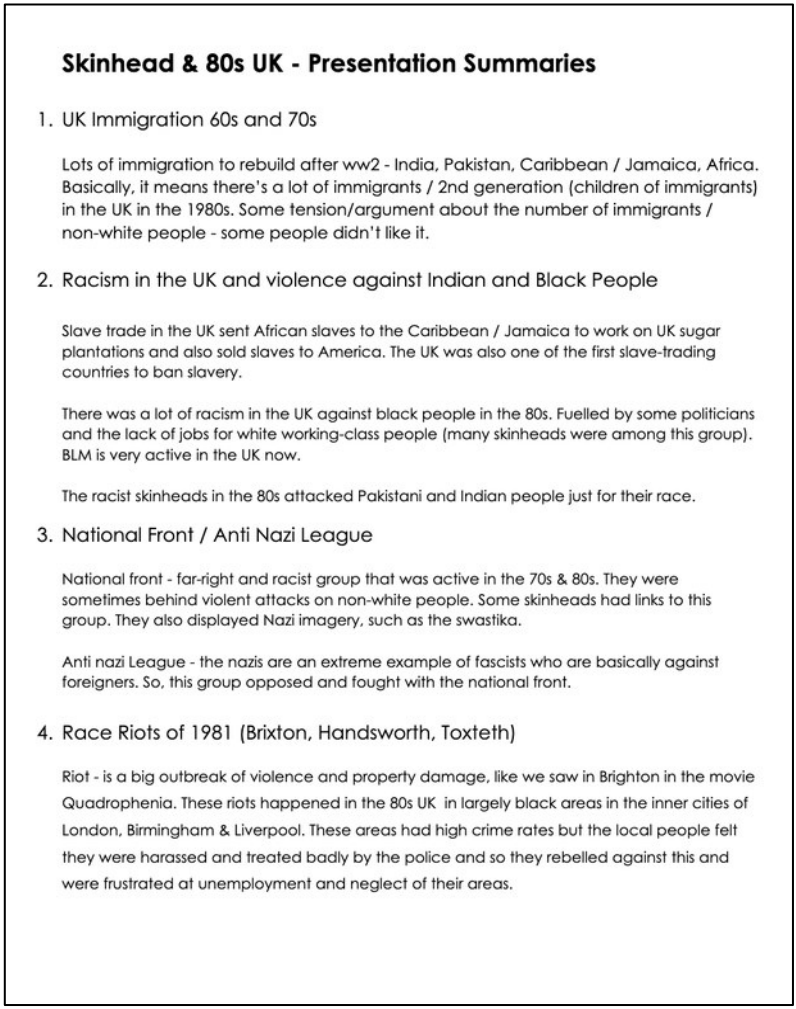
In this lesson, student groups reviewed and collated their research and then prepared their presentations while working in English. I consulted with each group, checking their information and ideas while assisting where necessary. Students were allowed to format and embellish the slides as they pleased. However, the learners were advised to make slides as visual as possible in line with the visual nature of the movie format and in keeping with best practice for slide production generally. The objective of the lesson was to complete a rough draft of presentations that could then be polished collaboratively for homework, ready to present in the next lesson.

Lesson 3: Presentations & Summaries

On presentation day, the students were given around 10 minutes to practice, but as stated in the instructions in Figure 2, they were not judged on their presentation skills. The presentations were not graded as such, but students received class participation points based on effort. This activity was intended to be as low-pressure as possible, emphasising the sharing of information with classmates. As the students presented, I took brief notes to summarise their points. This document was shared after the presentations, along with each

group's slides. An example extract of a summary document is included in Figure 3 for illustration.

Figure 3
An extract of a summary of the student presentations on the social conditions of 1980s UK



Skinhead & 80s UK - Presentation Summaries

1. UK Immigration 60s and 70s

   Lots of immigration to rebuild after ww2 - India, Pakistan, Caribbean / Jamaica, Africa. Basically, it means there's a lot of immigrants / 2nd generation (children of immigrants) in the UK in the 1980s. Some tension/argument about the number of immigrants / non-white people - some people didn't like it.

2. Racism in the UK and violence against Indian and Black People

   Slave trade in the UK sent African slaves to the Caribbean / Jamaica to work on UK sugar plantations and also sold slaves to America. The UK was also one of the first slave-trading countries to ban slavery.

   There was a lot of racism in the UK against black people in the 80s. Fuelled by some politicians and the lack of jobs for white working-class people (many skinheads were among this group). BLM is very active in the UK now.

   The racist skinheads in the 80s attacked Pakistani and Indian people just for their race.

3. National Front / Anti Nazi League

   National front - far-right and racist group that was active in the 70s & 80s. They were sometimes behind violent attacks on non-white people. Some skinheads had links to this group. They also displayed Nazi imagery, such as the swastika.

   Anti nazi League - the nazis are an extreme example of fascists who are basically against foreigners. So, this group opposed and fought with the national front.

4. Race Riots of 1981 (Brixton, Handsworth, Toxteth)

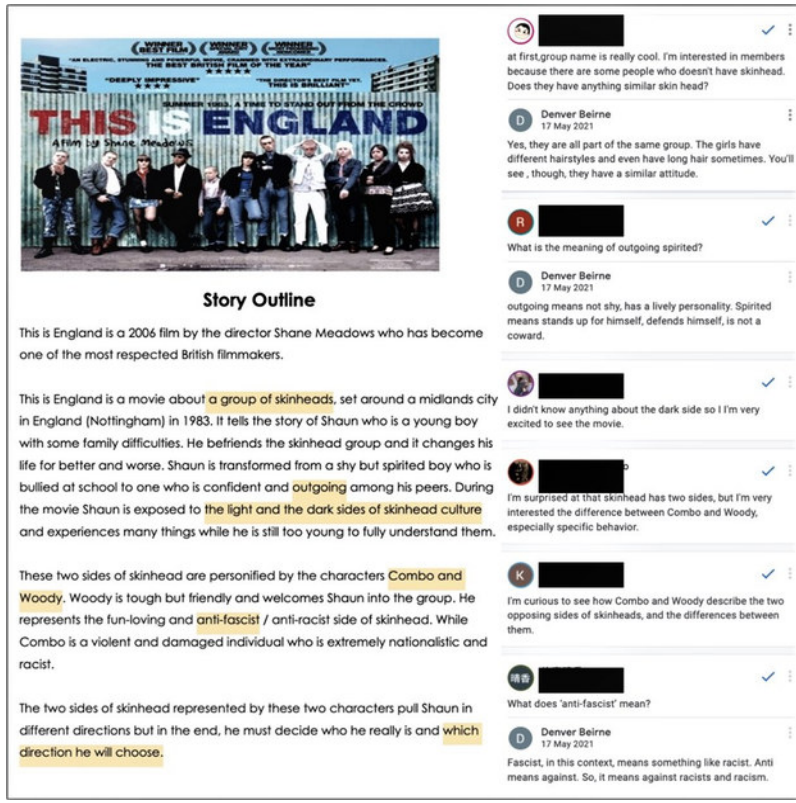
   Riot - is a big outbreak of violence and property damage, like we saw in Brighton in the movie Quadrophenia. These riots happened in the 80s UK in largely black areas in the inner cities of London, Birmingham & Liverpool. These areas had high crime rates but the local people felt they were harassed and treated badly by the police and so they rebelled against this and were frustrated at unemployment and neglect of their areas.

These presentations took most of the lesson. However, there was time for a brief class discussion to discover what the

students found interesting and for the teacher to answer questions. To conclude this lesson, the students were given a one-page summary of the movie story, as shown in Figure 4. For homework, learners were instructed to read the document, then comment, and ask questions on interesting or unclear points (using the comment function on *Google Slides*). The instructor then answered the questions by commenting on the document.

Figure 4

This is England story outline with student and teacher comments



Lesson 4: Watch the Movie (with English subtitles)

Students watched the movie together in the classroom. As this film was challenging linguistically, the English subtitles were displayed. Even though students had learned vocabulary in preparation for the film, the words are delivered rapidly, in unfamiliar accents, alongside an abundance of challenging lexical items. The students needed to digest the movie's content without a distracting focus on the vocabulary. Therefore, this method was chosen to allow students to follow the story, and recognise and reinforce the learned vocabulary while reducing the cognitive burden.

For homework, the learners created a video review and shared it with the class on the video-sharing application Flip. The software allows students to watch and comment securely on other class members' videos. In this way, students learned from their classmates and built up an increased understanding of the issues while increasing their opportunities to encounter or fortify relevant vocabulary. Figure 5 shows the assignment instructions.

Figure 5
Instructions for the video review of This is England


Apr 19, 2021

This is England Review

19 responses • 1,308 views • 51 comments • 56.2 hours of discussion

Please submit your video here:
This just a simple video. You don't need to edit or add music. Just speak straight to camera. I just want to hear your opinions. You won't be graded on presentation style.

Make it 3 - 5 minutes Deadline: xxxxxx
Then, watch 5 classmates' reviews and make comments
Deadline: xxxxxx

Movie Review Questions
One word summary of the movie
How was the acting?
What do you think about the characters?
Was the story good?
Was it well told?
Did you have any emotional connection - how did it make you feel?
What was a key scene for you?
What did you learn? / Were you surprised about anything?
What issues did it make you think about?
How does the movie deal with group identity and shared identity?
Would you recommend the movie? Why or why not?

Lesson 5-6: Students Review the Movie

In the final lesson, students discussed their reviews and opinions in small groups using the worksheet in Figure 6. A spokesperson summarised the group's discussion, with individual group members expanding and elaborating where appropriate. I facilitated a broader discussion with the class and took summary notes. An example of one of these summary sheets is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 6

Worksheet to discuss film review of This is England

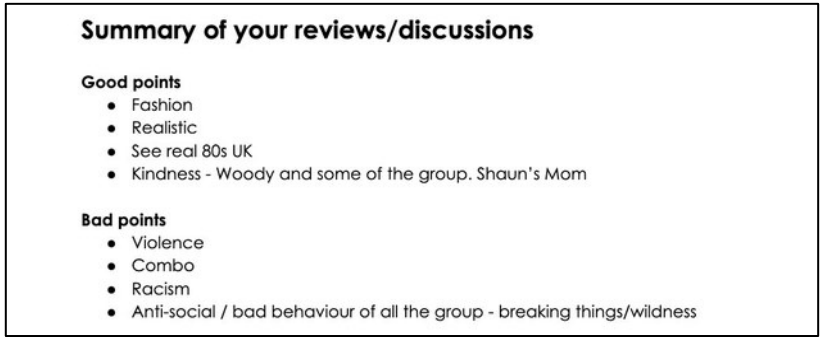
This is England - Review

Discussion (15 minutes)

- Choose a spokesperson for your group.
- Each member summarises your review to your group. (just the most memorable/interesting parts).
- Ask each other questions about the movie and follow-on questions about opinions.
- Ask a discussion Q to the group. If you have time.
- Do you have **Questions for Denver about the movie or *Skinhead*?**
- The spokesperson summarises or highlights interesting views/parts of the discussion.

Figure 7

Example summary of This is England review discussion



Summary of your reviews/discussions

Good points

- Fashion
- Realistic
- See real 80s UK
- Kindness - Woody and some of the group. Shaun's Mom

Bad points

- Violence
- Combo
- Racism
- Anti-social / bad behaviour of all the group - breaking things/wildness

Observations

- Many students thought about nationalism - why is it important? Many students talk about the bad points when nationalism goes too far.
- Many students commented about throwing the flag away - regret from Shaun for behaviour and nationalism. Saying goodbye to something (nationalism)?
- False nationalism/patriotism of the skinheads. Surprised at the two sides to skinhead with the anti-fascist side, too.
- Felt sorry for Shaun - bullying and losing his dad in the Falklands war and became easily led by combo.
- Disappointed in Shaun choosing Combo / racist side at first but he learned it was wrong by himself. Hope that he is ok.
- A lot of anger in Combo - his troubled (family) life (not shown/stated directly in the movie but there were hints about it). Maybe this is why there was so much anger in the skinhead subculture - Combo represented that. Woody represented the good side - fashion, fun and good rule-breaking.

Good or Bad?

- Most students liked it or found it interesting/ useful. Some students didn't like it because it was too unpleasant & violent but it was good to learn the reality.
- Some wouldn't recommend it because it's very strong.
- Need to know the background (social issues) to understand it.

Questions:

- Why was mom so mad about the haircut?
- Why did Milky hang out with Combo at the end?
- Why did Combo do that to Milky?

The summary was shared with the class on *Google Classroom*, and this completed the process. In the past, students had just reviewed the film with a group and class discussion. However, this method of combining the discussions with a video review facilitated the expression of more reflective and in-depth opinions, which ultimately improve the learning experience.

CONCLUSION

This process aimed to engage students with activities that practised the four skills while expanding learners' knowledge on a given subject. To this end, the focused discussions practised speaking and listening in a conversational style, whereas the presentations and video reviews allowed students to deliver pre-prepared or semi-prepared speech. The presentations and research notes enabled students to write text

and create multimodal content, while the movie's subtitles and the story summary document gave reading practice. Finally, the film and presentations also provided substantial listening opportunities.

The students' subject knowledge undoubtedly increased during the research and presentation phase of the activities. Learners often began with little or no knowledge of the subject and developed an understanding of their research topic as well as that of the other groups. Furthermore, students gained an awareness of how these topics connected more broadly to the subculture and the movie. This comprehension was displayed in the discussion summarised in Figure 7, where students often expressed the need to appreciate the relevant social issues to understand the film. Furthermore, this discussion demonstrated how students were impressively could engage with the complex subject matter of the movie to produce various considered and insightful opinions in their second language.

Finally, the paper sought to demonstrate a way of more fully integrating a movie into a language course. Hopefully, by covering the four skills through various activities suited to the course's learning outcomes, this six-stage process has gone some way toward fulfilling this objective. Furthermore, the method aspired to support the literature in showing the positive effects movies can have on student motivation, engagement and the practice of language learning fundamentals. In this vein, it is hoped that the paper might inspire more teachers to integrate English language movies into their curricula in ways that suit the language goals of their particular courses.

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