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Letter from the Editor

Hello, CUE members and other readers. As we approach the end of another year, I am happy to announce the completion of *OnCUE Journal* volume 16.1. It is packed with articles in all but one of our categories.

Feature articles include an interesting study on profanity by **Jennifer Green**, who has fulfilled her CUE grant award obligation. We may even see a second publication in the near future. The team of **Zeinab Shekarabi and Dorna Ebrahimi** have written about their Japanese language learners in Iran with a comparison of intermediate and advanced learners in a free writing course.

Sara Terre Blanche has given us a contribution in the Research Digest column with her paper on increasing authenticity in the Japanese classroom.

Christopher Stubbings has written a fact-filled paper in Opinion and Perspective. He looks at how the loss of student enrollment in Japanese universities may affect the foreign teacher employment chances in the next 15 years.

The Technology Matters column has two papers for your interests. **Soren Leaver** leads off by looking at Flip (formerly FlipGrid) from the standpoint of its efficacy during the COVID years. The other contribution is from **William Todd**, who looks at Task-Based Language Teaching in on-demand online courses.

OCJ offers 3 book reviews in this issue. **William Kuster** gives us a look at *Doing Replication Research in Applied Linguistics*, a valuable book by Graeme Porte and Kevin McManus (2019). **Adam Pearson** reviewed *101 EFL Activities for Teaching University Students*, authored by Hall Houston (2022). Finally, **Kate Piatkowski** provides her insight into Erica Zimmerman & Abigail McMeekin's edited book *Technology-Supported Learning In and Out of the Japanese Language Classroom: Advances in Pedagogy, Teaching and Research* (2019).

Lastly, we have two conference reviews, each from CUE grant awardees. **Joël Laurier** recaps the 2023 conference Children as Peacemakers in Divided

Societies: Educational Approaches put on by the War Childhood Museum Foundation and the International Association for Intercultural Education. **Tosh Tachino** tells us all about the CUE 30th Anniversary Conference from last year in Toyama. His was an especially unique review in that Tosh returned to Japan after 25 years of teaching in Canada, and this was his first conference to attend.

Dig in, or set this aside for casual reading over the winter break.

Glen Hill

Publications Chair and **OnCUE Journal** Chief Editor

Feature Article

Japanese EFL Learners' Knowledge of and Encounters with English Profanity

Jennifer Green

Miyagi Gakuin Women's University

Little research has been done on knowledge of English profanity in EFL populations. Moreover, no research has been done in Japanese EFL learners, whose language background creates unique challenges to understanding and learning this language. Therefore, a questionnaire was developed to study three aspects of profanity knowledge, background factors related to this knowledge, and frequency of encounters with profanity in various daily life activities. Results indicate participants had varying knowledge of English profanity, with particular difficulties related to differences between English and the participants' L1. The factors of English proficiency and time spent living in English-speaking countries were found to be significantly related to overall English profanity knowledge. Participants reported the situations where they most frequently encountered profanity to be from media and from the internet. Results are followed by implications for materials design and possible directions for future research.

Note. Please be advised that this study contains frequent usage of strong language both in English and in Japanese.

英語の禁句表現(English　profanity)に関する知識について、英語を外国語としての学習者を対象とした研究はほとんど行われていない。さらに、日本語を母国語とする言語背景がこの言語の学習に困難をもたらす日本人の英語学習者についての研究はほとんど行われていない。本研究は、日本人英語学習者を対象に、禁句表現の知識に関する3つの側面、この知識に関連する背景要因、および日常生活のさまざまな活動中での禁句表現との遭遇頻度を明らかにすることを目的とし、アンケート調査をおこなった。その結果、参加者は英語の禁句表現に関する知識にばらつきがあり、特に困難さは英語と学習者の母国語の違いに関係することが分かった。また、英語力や英語圏での生活期間が、英語の禁句表現に関する知識と有意に関連していることが示された。さらに、参加者は、禁句表現に最も頻繁に遭遇する場面として、メディアとインターネットを挙げた。終わりに、本研究結果に基づき、教材設計への示唆および今後の研究の方向性について議論した。

注記:本研究には英語および日本語の強い言葉が頻出することにご留意ください。

Despite what parents and teachers often espouse, swearing is both useful and prevalent in the English language. Native English speakers learn swearing at school, at home, in public, online, and in the media during adolescence, when risks are low and rebellious behavior is expected. But how do non-native speakers learn these words? Moreover, what about those living outside of English-speaking countries and whose native language contains taboo words that function quite differently from English (Stoffman, 1998; Dewaele, 2010)? In particular, taboo language in Japanese functions quite differently than in English, being more restricted in use both in what social situations are deemed acceptable for use and who is deemed socially acceptable to use such language. For English learners in Japan, these differences may inhibit the learning of English taboo language. No research has been done to study the specific difficulties that this group of learners faces in this common aspect of English. Therefore, the present study aims to expose how well Japanese EFL learners know English taboo language on three aspects of knowledge (productive knowledge, recognition, and knowledge of semantic function) and to discern what background factors relate to knowledge of English profanity.

One of the difficulties in determining how much profanity learners know is the definition of what constitutes profanity. Combining the ideas from the work of Jay (2009) and the work of Allan and Burridge (2006), this study defines profanity as certain words and phrases that have unique ability to convey and provoke strong emotional force, often deemed too powerful to be uttered freely due to their evocative nature which fall into one of several categories of taboo topics specific to each language. For English, these categories of language are as follows: sexual references, scatological, animal, ethnic, deviations, offensive slang, and blasphemous words (Jay, 2009).

Even with this definition, there are several cases where the same word may be viewed as either mundane or profane depending on the person's variety of English, religious background, age, and other various personal background factors. However, some words appear to be accepted as profanity for most English speakers, such as the words *shit* and *fuck* (Dewaele, 2015; Andang & Bram, 2018), and generally people are aware of differing perceptions of profanity

and act accordingly. For example, most Americans would be conscious of the word *bloody* during travels to England, and those who do not think of the interjection *God!* as profanity may be conscious of its use when speaking to a devout Christian. Therefore, when designing a study on profanity, it is best to either specify a regional variety of English whose profanity one chooses to study, or to focus on those words that are commonly viewed as profanity throughout most varieties of English.

One thing that can be said regardless of the variety of English is that profanity is has both *utility* and *ubiquity* in English, as described by Jay (2009). Jay describes the utility as the ability to perform various linguistic functions fulfilling different social goals. Other scholars have attempted to define this utility more narrowly (Pinker, 2008; Kapoor, 2016; Finn, 2017). The present study uses Kapoor's (2016) categories for profanity use for their focus on pragmatic usage. Kapoor defined five categories of profanity usage:

> (a) casual, directed to a nonliving object, situation or experience; (b) conversational, directed to an individual with no intention to cause harm; (c) cathartic, to express physical or emotional pain ... (d) abusive, directed to an individual to cause harm; and (e) hostile, to indicate antagonism. (pp. 259–260)

These categories specify who and what the profanity is aimed at and the tone of use. The category of conversational profanity is especially of interest because Japanese does not have this usage of profanity outside of some subcultures. Therefore, this usage of profanity may be especially difficult for Japanese learners to acquire as it places a higher burden on the learner due to the differences between the L1 and the L2 (Nation, 2013).

The ubiquity described by Jay (2009) can be readily observed by any native English speaker, though he and one other scholar (Beers Fägersten, 2012) both note that attempts to discern what percentage of the English language consists of profanity are inconsistent and flawed. Regardless, it is reasonable to assume that most, if not all, native English speakers have used profanity in at least one part of their life or throughout their whole life. However, for the majority of EFL learners who have limited access to authentic language exchange opportunities,

the chance to learn this language is far more limited as well. Language learned in an educational setting tends to have taboo subjects and language omitted (Gray, 2002). This presumably leaves most EFL learners with the option of learning taboo language only via unintentional exposure to or deliberate searches for the language via media and the internet. However, this is not ideal for several reasons. First, profanity is often used in different ways online than how it is used during in-person interactions (Wang et al., 2014; Gauthier & Guille, 2017). Second, online articles addressing profanity inaccurately reflect how profanity is used pragmatically (Green, 2021). Lastly, media viewed with L1 subtitles do not accurately relay the meaning and taboo nature of profanity due to difficulty of translation (Cintas & Rameal, 2014). Taken together, this means limited opportunity to notice and learn productive usage (utility) of English profanity.

Despite these challenges to learning English profanity, some Japanese EFL learners are bound to gain understanding of such words. However, it is unknown as to just how much Japanese EFL learners already know English profanity. This knowledge may provide insight into whether or not the resources and opportunities available to them without formal instruction on the language is adequate to learn English profanity. Further, finding what background factors relate to higher profanity knowledge may reveal what is needed for learners to gain knowledge of profanity. Therefore, the present study will ask the following research questions:

1. How well do adult Japanese EFL learners know English profanity?
2. What background factors relate to knowledge of English profanity?
3. Which daily life scenarios where taboo language is present do adult EFL Japanese learners engage with most?

Methods

To answer the research questions, an online questionnaire written in Japanese was developed using the software Qualtrics (qualtrics.com/au/core-xm/survey-software/) and distributed to learners at several universities, one vocational school, three conversation schools, and ten online English study groups. Participation was incentivized with a 2000-yen Amazon gift card drawing.

Responses (N = 512) were collected over 55 days from December 2020 to February 2021. The target population was adult Japanese learners of English who identified themselves in the questionnaire as actively taking steps to improve their English either formally via an educational institution or informally via self-study at the time of participation. Responses collected from participants that did not match the target population were removed, as were mostly incomplete responses, leaving 257 complete responses and 43 partial responses with enough data for use in analysis. Including partial respondents (n = 300), the majority were between 19-29 years old (n = 205) and were majority female (n = 197). Most had intermediate English proficiency (CEFR B1–B2 n = 177) and did not speak a third language past beginner proficiency (n = 248). The majority had less than 3 months of overseas experience in English-speaking countries (n = 248), had completed high school as their highest level of education (n = 179), and had started learning English at junior high school age (12–14 years old; n = 137). Some respondents (n = 56) appeared to have misunderstood the question on highest level of completed education, so the researcher manually adjusted answers based on participant age. Some participants (n = 142) were currently or had previously majored in English. Finally, most participants reported having learned English mostly through instruction-based learning (n = 175).

Background factors collected were chosen based on the works of Dewaele (2004, 2017): gender, personality, education, age of onset of learning English, type of English learning (naturalistic or instruction-based), self-rated spoken English proficiency, and experience living abroad in an English-speaking country. Factors not included from Dewaele's studies were personality and frequency of English usage. Assessing personality would require a much lengthier questionnaire to accurately measure, and information on frequency of English usage was not collected due to difficulty in accurately measuring it. The education section was expanded to ask if participants had studied or were studying English as their major in at least one of the schools they attended. Participants self-assessed their English proficiency based on the official Japanese translation (British Council of Japan, n.d.) of the CEFR Global Scale descriptions (Council of Europe, n.d.). An additional category of "native speaker" accompanied by

a description adapted from Davies (2004) was included to remove non-target participants. Participants were also asked if they had at least lower intermediate proficiency in any language other than Japanese or English. Finally, questions were included to confirm that all participants were native Japanese speakers and were actively engaging in activities to increase their English proficiency, either formally or informally.

The test sections measured three types of English profanity knowledge: productive knowledge, recognition, and semantic knowledge. Productive knowledge was tested with 10 gap-fill items based in part on the instrument developed for the work of Kapoor (2016). Each item contained brief relational and situational context written in Japanese accompanying a spoken or written English sentence with a missing word. In line with Kapoor's work, situations were categorized as casual, conversational, cathartic, abusive, or hostile. Participants could state that they did not know what to write rather than completing the gap-fill. Most of Kapoor's items were altered or rewritten to be more intelligible for participants with lower English proficiency and to include situations that may not involve face-to-face interactions (text messaging, internet reviews, etc.). Each situational category had two items: one open item which could be answered with a variety of correct answers, and one closed item that allowed for only one or two correct answers. The exception to this was for the conversational items, where finding a sentence limited to only one answer meant leading to a specific slur on a group of people which was deemed unethical to include. Therefore, both conversational items were closed.

Productive Test Example Items

5.1 V messaging friend A about a concert V attended: "That concert was so _____ good!" (Casual – Open; Acceptable answers: fucking, damn, bloody)

5.4 Y says to Z during a heated argument: "You're a piece of _____. I'll get revenge for this." (Abusive – Closed; Acceptable answer: shit)

For profanity recognition, participants selected the taboo word from a presented sentence. Participants could also select that they did not know the answer or that no taboo words were in the sentence. Seven sentences contained

taboo words, and three did not. Distractors were included in two of the sentences with profanity and in all sentences without profanity. Distractors were short, low-frequency words, unlikely to be known by participants while still feasible as profanity due to appearance (Bergen, 2016). All words besides profanity and distractors were of common frequency.

Profanity Recognition Test Example Items

6.5 I just know I'm gonna make an ass of myself.

6.9 Egad! I think I know the answer!

Semantic knowledge of profanity was tested with a single item consisting of 10 social situations written in Japanese accompanied with a verbal or written statement in English containing profanity. Participants selected items where the social situation and verbal statement matched. Each social situation had the potential for profanity usage, and each of the statements was a valid use of profanity grammatically. A longer format of multiple questions with each statement being given several potential social situations to choose from, or vice versa, may have yielded more accurate results. However, the shorter format was chosen to reduce questionnaire length and risk of participant withdrawal.

Semantic Knowledge of Profanity Test Example Items

7.5 Q, after being sent a message from P complaining about something, replies: "Quit bitching!" (correct usage)

7.10 B, upon reluctantly agreeing to participate, says: "Fuck yeah!" (incorrect usage)

In the section on encounters with English profanity, participants rated how often they encounter English profanity in daily life situations and activities (such as listening to music or talking with one's teacher outside of class) on a 7-point Likert scale from 1= "[I] never encounter English taboo language" to 7="[I] always encounter English taboo language" regarding each activity. Alternatively, participants could instead select that they do not do the activity. Language encounter scenarios were adapted from Briggs (2015) with additional categories added based on feedback from pilot participants and reduced to small phrases for brevity. Additionally, purely productive items (e.g., writing) were removed since receptive encounters were the focus of this study. Other items from Briggs's

study were cut or altered due to irrelevance to this study. Because the focus of the study is Japanese EFL rather than ESL contexts, participants were asked to report only on experiences within Japan.

Several measures were taken to ensure that the questionnaire was understood by participants and tested the intended topic. Pilot testing was performed with seven pilot participants of varying genders, ages, and English proficiency levels to confirm items were unlikely to be misinterpreted. An explanation of the term "taboo language" described the meaning of the term so that learners would not mistake it to mean insults or negative language, which the direct translation to Japanese insinuates. The questionnaire was translated into Japanese by the author in consultation with several Japanese colleagues with all items and explanations being written in Japanese except for quoted speech found in test items. A back-translation confirmed accuracy of the translation. Items in each test section were presented in a randomized order.

Results

Knowledge of English Profanity

Each item on the profanity knowledge test was given a score of 1 for a correct answer, and 0 for an incorrect answer. Points for the productivity test were determined by the researcher and two other native English judges, each coming from a different English-speaking country. Two judges were male, and one was female. All judges were each at least 10 years apart in age from each other. The judges scored the tests individually, and scores were compared. When scores differed, the judges consulted until they agreed on a final score. Half-points were issued for uses of minced oaths (a non-offensive word standardly used in place of a more taboo word, e.g. *frick* instead of *fuck* or *darn* instead of *damn*) when used correctly. Half points were also given for word/spelling choices that would give the listener pause but would not disrupt communication (i.e., receptive interlocutor does not feel need to request clarification). Selection of "I do not know what to write" was scored as 0. Scores for each overall section were calculated only for participants that had completed all items of the section. Likewise, combined scores were calculated only if all sections were completed.

Table 1

English Profanity Productive Knowledge Mean Scores by Item

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
5.1 Casual-Open	291	.418	.4861	.0285
5.2 Casual-Closed	287	.247	.4282	.0253
5.3 Abusive-Open	292	.295	.4528	.0265
5.4 Abusive-Closed	293	.244	.4272	.0250
5.5 Cathartic-Open	292	.342	.4717	.0276
5.6 Cathartic-Closed	290	.605	.4762	.0280
5.7 Conversational-Open	289	.114	.3047	.0179
5.7 Conversational-Open	287	.134	.3323	.0196
5.9 Hostile-Open	290	.202	.4009	.0235
5.10 Hostile-Closed	279	.545	.4916	.0294

Participants scored highest in semantic knowledge (mean = 6.280, stdv = 1.6810) receptive knowledge was moderate (mean = 5.550, stdv = 1.4820), and productive knowledge was lowest (mean = 3.208, stdv = 2.9085). For productive knowledge, the lowest productive scores were from conversational uses. Abusive profanity also received low scores along with casual-closed, and hostile-open. Besides use of English profanity, attempts to directly translate Japanese insulting language and words from Japanese taboo topics were found in several items (e.g., "die," "idiot," and "fool"). The highest scores were received for cathartic-closed, hostile-closed, and casual-open. See Table 1 for results of each productive item.

For receptive knowledge, the lowest average score was for the item containing the word "Jesus" as the taboo word, followed by the three distractor items. Highest scores were received for the items containing "fuck" and "shitty." Table 2 shows results for each receptive item.

For semantic function knowledge, the item containing the phrase "fucked

Table 2

English Profanity Receptive Knowledge Mean Scores by Item

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
6.1 "fuck"	271	.95	.214	.013
6.2 "shitty"	271	.91	.290	.018
6.3 "hell"	270	.75	.433	.026
6.4 "piss"	271	.80	.400	.024
6.5 "ass"	268	.85	.353	.022
6.6 "Jesus"	270	.06	.229	.014
6.7 "bastard"	272	.61	.489	.030
6.8 distractor "boon"	273	.12	.331	.020
6.9 distractor "egad"	268	.17	.374	.023
6.10 distractor "oft"	271	.32	.468	.028

up" received a low average score relative to the other items in this section. On the high end, the item containing the word "shitting me" received relative high average score. Table 3 shows results for each semantic function item.

Background Factors Affecting English Taboo Language Knowledge

A histogram of combined scores from participants that completed all sections was used to determine normal distribution, indicating a slightly uneven distribution, but within reasonable boundaries for conducting further parametric tests. Therefore, a univariate analysis of variance was performed with the dependent factor of combined profanity knowledge to the fixed factors of participant backgrounds. The factors of English proficiency and abroad experience in an English-speaking country were the only two factors that significantly affected combined profanity knowledge ($p=.004$ and $p=.001$ respectively). The factors of gender, style of acquisition, L3-proficiency, age, English major, education, and

Table 3

English Profanity Semantic Knowledge Mean Scores by Item

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
7.1 correct "bullshit"	266	.58	.494	.030
7.2 correct "fucked up"	266	.39	.489	.030
7.3 correct "Jesus Christ"	265	.62	.487	.030
7.4 correct "fucking"	266	.58	.495	.030
7.5 correct "bitching"	265	.52	.500	.031
7.6 incorrect "cock"	265	.79	.409	.025
7.7 incorrect "shitting me"	265	.89	.313	.019
7.8 incorrect "pissed off"	265	.60	.492	.030
7.9 incorrect "damn"	266	.55	.499	.031
7.10 incorrect "fuck yeah"	266	.76	.426	.026

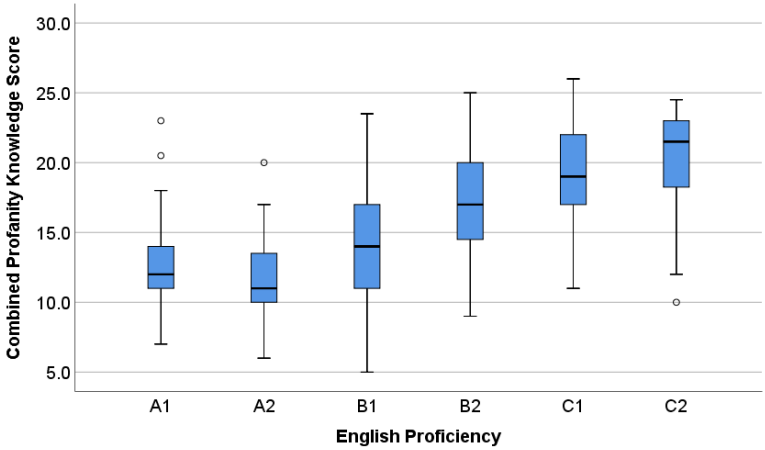

Figure 1. Combined Profanity Knowledge Scores Grouped by English Proficiencies

age of onset were all found to be insignificant.

A post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparisons test was performed comparing combined profanity knowledge scores to levels of English proficiency. Comparing each proceeding level of proficiency showed significant, medium gains between levels A2*B1 (2.395 mean score difference, d=.65) and significant, large gains between levels B1*B2 (3.122 mean score difference, d=.86). Figure 1 provides visualization of the total profanity test mean scores by proficiency level.

An Independent Samples t-Test found significantly higher profanity knowledge in participants with experience living abroad in an English-speaking country for 3+ months. However, there were few advanced participants with no abroad experience and very few beginner participants with abroad experience. This means the significant gain may be attributed to proficiency, so further analysis was performed. Numbers of beginner and advanced participants with varying abroad experience were not viable for analysis due to small sample size. Therefore, a Univariate Analysis of Covalence was performed with the fixed factor of intermediate proficiencies combined with abroad experience. Post-hoc

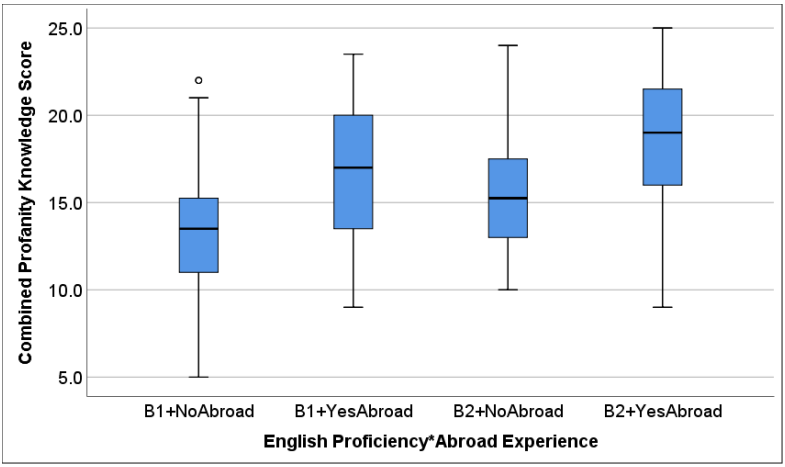

Figure 2. Mean Combined Profanity Knowledge Scores Across Combined Factors of Intermediate English Proficiencies and Abroad Experience

Bonferroni showed significant, large gains of those with the same proficiency but differing abroad experience (see Figure 2 for visualization). Average scores between participants with B1-proficiency were significantly higher in those who had abroad experience with a medium effect size (3.114 mean score difference, d=.77). Similarly, average scores between B2 participants were significantly higher in those who had abroad experience with a large effect size (3.187 mean score difference, d=.87).

Engagement with Taboo Language in Daily Activities

Table 4 shows engagement in each activity by participants and reported frequency of profanity encounters by situation type. Participants that selected not doing the activity were removed from mean analysis for that activity. Most activities were rated as low-frequency for profanity encounters (Likert-scale points <3). Only three scenarios scored above 4 points (movies/DVDs, comments on the internet, and social media). The three scenarios that scored the lowest all involved interactions with teachers.

After visual inspection, a pattern of correlation between higher average frequency of encounter and higher participant disagreement (i.e. standard deviation) emerged. The relationship was confirmed via regression analysis (r=0.866, p=.000). This could denote some learners filtering media that contains profanity due to personal preference on profanity itself or on the types of media that contain frequent profanity usage. This may also be due to proficiency divides, with lower-proficiency learners more frequently interacting with L1 media thus decreasing encounters with profanity. All learners reported far fewer encounters from in-person and interpersonal interactions, with lesser disagreement between participants. This may relate to preserving face during such interactions or may denote that these interactions are more commonly performed in Japanese by all participants.

Table 4

Reported Frequency of Encounters With English Profanity

Activity	Does not engage in activity (*n*)	Engages in activity (*n*)	Mean Likert Score	Std. Deviation
Movies, DVDs	6	262	4.56	2.04
Comments on the internet	10	256	4.2	1.955
Social media	12	256	4.04	1.946
Music or songs	5	262	3.84	1.963
Reviews on the internet	16	252	3.67	1.982
Internet webpages	11	256	3.17	1.898
Video games	80	187	2.98	2.045
TV programs	20	248	2.93	1.922
Comics	78	188	2.77	1.832
Listening to other people's conversations	9	256	2.72	1.788
Signs, posters, T-shirts, menus, etc.	23	243	2.41	1.677
When talking with friends	10	256	2.4	1.721
Talking to those who cannot speak Japanese	23	245	2.32	1.783
Novels	46	222	2.3	1.607
Radio programs or podcasts	48	219	2.29	1.693
When messaging friends	13	253	2.29	1.614
Magazines	50	218	2.03	1.612
Getting information from other people	15	250	2	1.407
Talking to those who can speak Japanese	7	261	1.93	1.379
Talking to someone you live with	43	224	1.75	1.48
Email	23	245	1.58	1.183
Talking with your teacher outside of class	34	233	1.5	1.103
Talking with your teacher inside class	29	237	1.38	1.004
Listening to your teacher talk	20	248	1.38	0.945

Note. Table sorted by average mean Likert score.

Discussion

Knowledge of English Profanity

Scores in each of the aspects of profanity knowledge may have been influenced in part by item design. The design of the productive knowledge test was gap-fill, which is generally more difficult than multiple-choice item design which was used for the receptive knowledge test. Upon reflection, the design of the semantic knowledge test was overly insensitive, with a 50/50 chance of being correct. There was no option for participants to select that they do not know the answer, forcing the participant to guess. Therefore, the scores for each section cannot be directly compared with each other.

Low scores for conversational profanity were expected considering the lack of this type of profanity in Japanese. Unexpectedly, abusive profanity was also difficult for participants despite abusive profanity being found in Japanese. This result may have arisen instead from the different categorizations of taboo topics that direct insults come from in the two languages. It was also expected that closed options would be more difficult for participants, but the two highest scores were from closed items. Both items were correctly scored with the use of the word "fuck," but it is unlikely that the high scores are results of guessing alone considering comparatively low uses of "fuck" to answer other items. Knowledge of the phrase "what the fuck" may be explained by its high frequency (13,991 occurrences in COCA; Davies, 2008), but the same cannot be said for the phrase "fuck off." Perhaps the latter phrase elicits more usage of vocabulary learning strategies or elicits more effective vocabulary learning strategies used when encountered, leading to quicker acquisition of the phrase. This higher or more effective use of learning strategies may be due to the highly antagonistic nature of the phrase making it more memorable. Use of Japanese taboo language translated into the L2 was expected, showing participants' reliance on the L1. Finally, as mentioned previously, overall low scores in this section relative to the other sections may be attributed to the item design. However, they may also be related to limited opportunities for productive profanity use compared to receptive exposure.

Low scores on receptive distractor items were in part due to the selection of distractors, indicating that some participants were guessing unknown words to be profanity. This may mean that results from items containing profanity with no distractor (6.1—6.5) may have been guessed rather than known. The one score that greatly deviates from the others is item 6.6 with the interjective use of "Jesus," with only 15 participants selecting correctly. This may be due to the use of the distractor "hock" in the sentence, which was selected by participants more often over the target taboo word. This may also be related to the lack of religious taboo words in Japanese and the use of Jesus as a non-taboo word when not used as an interjection, making this word harder to recognize as taboo. Logically, the word "hell" would also follow this pattern, but the recognition of "hell" to be a swearword may be attributed to similarities with the Japanese taboo topic of death and the highly offensive Japanese phrase "jigoku ike" (meaning "go to hell"). However, with no distractor in the sentence containing "hell," reasons for this discrepancy are unclear.

For semantic function, insensitive item design may have resulted in middling scores. However, that learners were correct more than incorrect on all but one item indicates the participants have some knowledge in this area. The one item with a low score was 7.2 (Person F, when relaying to friend Person G that Person F did something bad, says: "I really fucked up."). It is unclear why this usage was difficult for learners. One possibility is the multiple meanings of the phrase "fucked up," being used to indicate an intoxicated state, the ruination of something, something disturbing, or a mistake made. Perhaps some learners know one of the alternate meanings of the phrase and falsely assumed it to be the only meaning. With enough participants making this error, it may have led to these results. This assumption relates to the fact that most Japanese profanity has far fewer meanings for any one word or phrase compared to that of English profanity.

The item with both the highest score and lowest standard deviation was 7.7 (Person D, concerned about friend Person E's health, messages: "You're shitting me."). One possible explanation for this high score is the connections between the word "shit" and Japanese "kuso." The topic of health indicates a literal usage

of the word, but the Japanese version of the word cannot be used to literal mean "feces." Participants may have assumed this restriction for the use of the word "shit" as well and guessed correctly without knowing the meaning of the phrase. One other possibility is the serious tone of topic, where usage of profanity may be viewed as inappropriate and therefore incorrect from a Japanese viewpoint. Therefore, it may be that participants did not know the phrase and its usages but instead guessed correctly based on L1 knowledge rather than L2 knowledge.

Background Factors Affecting English Taboo Language Knowledge

Many factors that were expected to affect English profanity knowledge failed to show significance. Gendered use of profanity in the L1 would presumably result in differing scores between male and female participants, but it may be that this gendered aspect does not extend to the L2, or that overall knowledge remains the same between men and women, while other aspects such as frequency of usage in the L2 may be significantly different. Similarly, a relationship with style of acquisition was expected, but perhaps being surrounded by Japanese culture and continuous use of the L1 reduced opportunity to encounter profanity, even in natural daily life language learning situations. As for having an L3, perhaps it is insignificant unless at a higher proficiency or only has an effect if it shares similarities in taboo language use to English. The factors of age, English major, education, and age of onset were all insignificant. Insignificance from other examined factors may all relate to the Japanese education system shared by most participants that generally excludes discussion of profanity.

Results indicate that the highest gain happens between high-beginner and high-intermediate levels. No significant gains were found between low-beginner and high-beginner levels, with the average score for low-beginners surpassing high-beginners. This may be explained by a higher proportion of atypical participants at the low-beginner level, with several typical participants not completing the survey. A1 participants had the highest dropout rate among participants that had competed at least one item (completion rates: A1 75%, A2 84%, B1 85%, B2 88%, C1 86%, C2 95%). Responses from a subsequent

study related to the present study indicate deviant cases in lower and higher levels to likely be genuine answers rather than chance guessing, hence why they were included in the chart results. Lack of significancy in other progressive levels may be explained by more gradual learning, which may not be evident when comparing gains between each level of proficiency.

Results showing increased scores in those who had abroad experience were expected. This is because time abroad for 3+ months allows for higher exposure to profanity in daily life, which increases the chance of acquisition. These results may hold true for the beginner and advanced levels, but without adequate number of participants to compare, it remains unknown.

Engagement with Taboo Language in Daily Activities

Music and songs were expected to score highly, but did not receive a score higher than four. Movies/DVDs elicited an average score higher than 4 points, but other forms of media did not. For many of these forms of media, this can be explained by the amount of English that is encountered in general. Foreign movies make up a large proportion of the movies that are shown in movie theaters, making up more than 50% of movies shown in theaters for seven years between 2000-2023, and almost half of movies for the majority of other years (Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan, n.d.). Of these movies, it can be assumed that the majority come from Hollywood. In comparison, other forms of English media are not nearly as prevalent as their Japanese counterparts. This could explain why other forms of media did not score as highly for profanity encounters because encountering English during these activities was less common overall. Besides movies, comments on the internet and social media were also places where higher frequency of English taboo word encounters were expected. This is likely due to both the higher encounters with English overall while online along with the anonymous nature of the internet increasing the amount of taboo language used. While social media is not always anonymous, it often lends itself as a place where people feel more comfortable using casual language that they may not use in daily life due to lack of immediate consequence and ability to control one's audience.

Activities involving teachers all received very low scores for encounters with

profanity, each with ≤1.5 points. This can be understood by the fact that the Japanese student-teacher relationship is usually formal where taboo language in general, let alone English taboo language, is unlikely to be used. Formality may also explain other activities such as with email or getting information from other people, where politeness is expected. However, this does not explain lower scores in interpersonal activities where politeness is not expected such as when communicating with people you live with or messaging friends. In these cases, again the majority of these situations would be in Japanese and therefore unlikely to contain any English except that which has been appropriated into the Japanese language.

Conclusion

These results show that Japanese EFL learners are encountering and acquiring knowledge of English profanity despite not learning about such language in formal education settings. However, the results also indicate that learners have greater difficulty in those areas where English and Japanese differ, such as with conversational profanity, limitations in word meaning, and with profane words that belong to a taboo categorization in English but not a taboo category found in Japanese. Such differences are harder for learners to overcome and could possible be an area where explicit instruction helps aid learners in acquiring this language and therefore avoiding potential future difficulties where such language may be either misinterpreted or misused due to lack of adequate understanding.

The results showing that English proficiency and time spent abroad in English-speaking countries are related to higher profanity knowledge both reflect that higher exposure may be an important factor to acquiring English profanity knowledge. Higher proficiency comes with more time exposed to the language in general but may also come with more exposure to English outside of the classroom, where chances to encounter profanity are higher than the sanitized version of the language found in most educational institutions. Likewise, living abroad exposes learners daily to slang in person, including profanity, which appears to be more effective for learning such language considering the higher scores found in those who had abroad experience. As postulated in the literature

review, it may be that the change in culture also contributes to this higher understanding of profanity, where profanity in English-speaking countries is more likely to be used in friendly, daily life situations than in Japan, where profanity is more restricted in usage.

Japanese EFL learners have knowledge of English profanity, but the finding that these learners most commonly report encountering profanity through media and the internet may indicate an incomplete knowledge of profanity. As discussed by scholars (Wang et al., 2014; Gauthier & Guille, 2017), the ways that profanity is used differ in person versus online both in frequency and in how such language is used by different groups of people. It is possible that learners have a false idea of when, where, and to whom with profanity may be used based on their encounters with the language via media and the internet. However, without further study, this is purely speculation.

Those designing materials addressing the topic of English profanity would be advised to take the results from this study into consideration. It could be beneficial for learners to read about areas where profanity differ in English and Japanese to aid in their acquisition of the language. Care should be taken when discussing conversational and abusive profanity and the differences between the two due to the potential for particularly negative social outcomes from use of such language. Learners should be made aware of types of profanity that are not present in the Japanese language, such as with profane words related to religion. It may also benefit learners to know how a single profane word or phrase in English can have several more meanings than they expect. Learning about cultural differences related to profanity and its pragmatic functions may aid learners in understanding the language. Finally, considering that many learners are exposed to profanity online and in the media, it might be beneficial to learners to give learners information on or examples of how profanity is sometimes used differently in these contexts as opposed to in-person situations.

Several limitations were found for this study. At least two background factor items were misinterpreted by some participants. Answers about educational background were able to be adjusted to a more probable answer based on participant age. Answers about experience living in an English-speaking country

showed misunderstanding about which countries are included as English-speaking countries. This means that differences between those with abroad experience in English-speaking countries may be different than what was found presently. Insensitive and poor item design could have affected results of semantic knowledge and receptive knowledge. Item design also meant that scores between different aspects of profanity knowledge were unable to be directly compared. Additionally, profanity knowledge scores may not accurately represent all Japanese learners, considering the higher incompletion rates for participants with lower English proficiency. Learners not interested in profanity or with negative attitudes on profanity might have chosen not to participate in the study at all.

There are many areas regarding this topic of research that have yet to be explored. Research on English profanity knowledge, attitudes, and usage are generally limited to ESL populations. More studies with varying EFL populations might offer differing perspectives. Likewise, the questionnaire developed for this study could be used with participants of different language backgrounds, though modifications to add distractors to all items in the receptive test and more sensitivity to the semantic test would be recommended.

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Author Bio

Jennifer Green *is an assistant professor at Miyagi Gakuin Women's University. She has been teaching English in Japan for nine years. She has an MSc in Applied Linguistics for Language Teaching from the University of Oxford. Her research interests include English profanity in the Japanese EFL setting. jennifer@mgu.ac.jp*

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Feature Article

Exploring Lexical Complexity, Fluency, and Kanji Use in JFL Free Writing

Zeinab Shekarabi* (Corresponding author)
University of Tehran

Dorna Ebrahimi
University of Tehran

Second language learners face numerous challenges in acquiring proficiency in writing, particularly in languages with complex writing systems such as Japanese. This study investigated the lexical diversity, lexical density, writing fluency, and kanji use among intermediate and advanced Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) learners in their free writing. The sample comprised 48 undergraduate students with different proficiency levels (intermediate and advanced). Participants were asked to write a Japanese essay on a given topic within a time limit. Results revealed significant differences between the two proficiency levels across all variables. Advanced learners exhibited higher lexical diversity, greater writing fluency, and increased kanji use compared to their intermediate counterparts. Conversely, intermediate learners demonstrated higher lexical density, indicative of a preference for simpler vocabulary and linguistic structures. These findings underscore the importance of proficiency level in shaping language production abilities and highlight the nuanced relationship between proficiency and written language skills in a second language context. This suggests the need for targeted instructional interventions to support JFL learners' acquisition of written language skills and calls for further research to explore the underlying mechanisms driving proficiency-related differences in language production abilities.

第二言語学習者、特に複雑な表記体系を持つ日本語学習者は、文章の執筆に際し多くの問題に直面する。本研究では、中級及び上級の日本語学習者の作文における語彙の多様性、語彙密度、文章の流暢さ、漢字使用を調査した。日本語学習者48名は制限時間内に日本語作文を書いた。その結果、全ての変数において

2つの習熟度レベルの間に有意差が見られた。上級学習者は語彙の多様性、文章の流暢さ、漢字の使用率が高いことが示されたが、中級学習者は語彙密度が高く、より単純な語彙と言語構造であるという傾向を示した。すなわち、言語生産能力を形成する上での習熟度レベルの重要性を強調し、第二言語の文脈における習熟度と書く能力の微妙な関係を示している。これは日本語学習者の書く能力の習得を支援する指導介入の必要性を示唆しており、言語生産能力における熟達度に関連した違いを生み出す根本的な過程を探るための更なる研究が必要であることを示す。

Lexical diversity, also referred to as lexical richness (Daller et al., 2003), is a term used to quantify the variety of vocabulary in texts and is often used as a metric for assessing students' overall language proficiency. Conversely, lexical density measures the proportion of lexical words (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives, and some adverbs) within a text (Johansson, 2008). Generally, texts with lower density are more easily comprehensible, with spoken texts typically exhibiting lower lexical density compared to written texts (Halliday, 1989; Ure, 1971). However, as argued by Johansson (2008), a text may exhibit high lexical diversity (i.e., containing numerous word types) but low lexical density (i.e., containing many pronouns and auxiliary verbs), or vice versa.

In higher education, students' writing richness, including lexical diversity and density, are commonly evaluated to gauge their language skills. On the other hand, free writing, a form of creative expression, provides students with the opportunity to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions (Elbow, 1973). It is associated with enhanced writing fluency because it fosters confidence and reduces limitations and anxiety (Listyani & Tananuraksakul, 2019; Maloney, 2022; Shekarabi, 2017, 2020, 2023, in press; Spiro, 2014).

Proficiency in writing constitutes a pivotal aspect of language acquisition, yet second language (L2) learners frequently grapple with the complexities of intricate writing systems such as Japanese. A comprehensive understanding of the determinants shaping writing proficiency, including factors such as lexical complexity and fluency, is imperative for devising efficacious pedagogical strategies. Moreover, the role played by kanji characters in Japanese script remains inadequately explored within the framework of L2 acquisition. This

study aims to bridge these knowledge gaps by scrutinizing variations in lexical diversity, lexical density, fluency, and kanji use across intermediate and advanced Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) learners, thereby offering valuable insights for educators and researchers. Investigating how JFL learners across different proficiency levels such as intermediate and advanced produce different text lengths in Japanese free writing assumes paramount importance. Furthermore, since the Japanese writing system incorporates three distinct character types (i.e., hiragana, katakana, and kanji), it is essential to explore potential disparities in kanji use among JFL learners based on their proficiency levels in the context of free writing. Another crucial aspect involves examining the impact of free writing on JFL learners' lexical density and diversity across varying proficiency levels.

Lexical Diversity and Lexical Density

Lexical complexity is a multifaceted construct encompassing primary dimensions: lexical diversity and lexical density (Lu, 2012). Writing development is closely associated with these lexical dimensions, as evidenced by the presence of more unique, content-rich, or infrequent words in a learner's text, indicative of higher text quality or proficiency (Friginal et al., 2014; Kormos, 2011; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998; Yoon & Polio, 2017; Zenker & Kyle, 2021).

Lexical diversity is defined as the proportion of unique words relative to the total word count in a given text (Lu, 2012). This metric is commonly assessed using the type-token ratio, or "the ratio of unique word types to the overall word tokens present in the text (Lu, 2014, p. 4)." Conversely, lexical density is quantified as the ratio of lexical or content words to the total word count, encompassing both lexical (content) and grammatical (functional) terms (Ure, 1971).

Given that the lexicon constitutes a vital component of written language and serves as an indicator of language proficiency, lexical diversity and lexical density hold significant positions in writing assessment and research. Grant and Ginther (2000) examined essays written at three proficiency levels (3, 4, and 5 out of 6 levels, with 1 being the lowest), comparing type-token ratio, average word length, and essay length. They observed a consistent increase in both lexical diversity

and density as proficiency levels advanced, with essays by more proficient writers featuring longer and more varied words.

In another study, Cumming et al. (2006) investigated lexical complexity (type-token ratio) and average word length in essays from a TOEFL essay task across three proficiency levels (representing Score Levels 3, 4, and 5). They noted significant differences between Levels 3 to 4 and Levels 3 to 5, though no significant distinctions were observed between Levels 4 to 5. Additionally, they found that average word length was influenced by proficiency level, albeit with a small effect size.

Durrant and Brenchley (2019) examined children's use of written vocabulary across school years and observed that the frequency of low-frequency words did not differ significantly across year groups. However, specific lexical parts of speech exhibited variations, with the mean frequencies of verbs and adjectives decreasing significantly with age while the mean frequency of nouns increased. Their findings suggest that younger children's writing is characterized by extensive repetition of high-frequency verbs and adjectives along with low-frequency nouns, indicating a preference for fiction-like vocabulary over academic-like vocabulary.

Writing Fluency and Free Writing

Writing fluency encompasses speed, coherence, and fluidity in expression. A seamless flow of ideas facilitated by proficient language processing distinguishes proficient writers and underscores the importance of fluency as a hallmark of writing competence. Writing fluency remains a multifaceted construct in second language acquisition research, with varying definitions proposed (Abdel Latif, 2013; Fellner & Apple, 2006). Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998) characterized it as the rapid, appropriate, and coherent production of written text, while van Gelderen et al. (2011) emphasized the rapid and efficient retrieval of lexical items for grammatical production. Yasuda (2022) further defines writing fluency as "the development of the ability to rapidly produce coherent second language (L2) written output through efficient linguistic knowledge retrieval" (p. 2).

Numerous studies have explored writers' cognitive load during the writing

process, echoing Kellogg's (1988, 1996) observations of the limitations of working memory and cognitive burden on L2 writers' text length and quality. Despite extensive research and considerations of task complexity, no clear consensus has emerged. Johnson et al. (2012) investigated the impact of pre-task planning on written output, concluding that a certain proficiency level is necessary to free up attentional resources for fluent output. Conversely, Ong and Zhang (2010) found a negative correlation between task complexity and fluency, with the more cognitively demanding conditions yielding greater text quantity. While findings on how task complexity affects fluency remain inconclusive, they suggested that alternative approaches may be more effective in enhancing fluency than task manipulation alone.

One such approach is free writing, which shows promise in increasing text length and improving writing fluency (Yasuda, 2022; Azizi, 2015; Karimpour & Asl, 2016) and improving essay coherence (Shekarabi, 2017). Free writing practices conducted over several weeks have led to significant improvements in written fluency, with participants demonstrating higher word production rates post-engagement (Weston et al., 2011). Moreover, the benefits of free writing extend to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in higher education contexts, with free writing sessions resulting in substantial increases in text output (Hwang, 2010). Guided free writing interventions have also proved effective, as evidenced by statistically significant increases in word counts observed among college-level EFL students after a semester of practice (Maloney, 2022). Maloney further underscores the positive impact of free writing on writing fluency in creative contexts among Japanese English as a Second Language (ESL) students, suggesting that free writing provides learners with the opportunity to enhance their linguistic fluency and creativity. The collective evidence suggests that free writing can serve as an effective strategy for augmenting text length and enhancing writing fluency in second language learners.

Using Kanji in Writing

The Japanese writing system is renowned for its complexity, comprising three primary scripts: hiragana, katakana, and kanji. Hiragana and katakana are

phonetic scripts representing syllabic sounds and are used primarily for native Japanese words and loanwords, respectively. In contrast, kanji characters are logographic symbols mostly derived from Chinese characters, each representing a unique concept or idea. Kanji characters play a crucial role in Japanese text as they convey both meaning and sound, enabling nuanced expression and comprehension.

The complex shapes of each kanji and varied readings are what make learning and using kanji the most difficult part for JFL learners. Besides this complexity, there are exceptions in reading kanji where the characters are used for their phonetic sound rather than their meaning. It can be confusing because the meaning of the kanji cannot match the word it stands for (Shekarabi & Tajfirooz, 2023). One such example of this challenge is the following: The Japanese word for adult is 大人, pronounced "otona", but this pronunciation has absolutely nothing to do with the readings of these kanji. Literally, the character 大 means big, and 人 means "individual" or "person." Etymologically, the character 大 is pronounced "ookii" and "ta," and 人 is pronounced "hito" and "jin" originally. Therefore, the word, 大人 is pronounced differently from the kanji that are included in it.

Due to their ideographic nature, kanji characters offer a concise and efficient means of communication, allowing writers to convey complex ideas with minimal text. The ability to use kanji is an obvious sign of orthographic knowledge on the part of learners with respect to the conventions of writing and of teachers with respect to written Japanese texts (Liao et al., 2022). However, mastering kanji use presents a formidable challenge for learners of JFL because it requires memorization of thousands of characters, each with multiple readings and meanings. Although learning kanji is challenging for learners of Japanese, especially those from an alphabetic background, they believe that learning kanji and using them in their Japanese production is important since this will allow them to be positively evaluated and known as professional Japanese learners (Shekarabi & Tajfirooz, 2022). More proficient learners may thus use more kanji in their written texts (Shekarabi & Tajfirooz, 2023).

Both kanji acquisition and use among JFL learners have garnered significant

research attention, with scholars exploring various factors influencing kanji proficiency. Studies have identified several key determinants of kanji acquisition, including learners' prior language experience, exposure to written Japanese texts, and instructional approaches. For example, learners with a background in Chinese may demonstrate a comparative advantage in kanji recognition and recall due to shared character forms and meanings (Matsumoto, 2013; Hagiwara, 2016). Additionally, extensive reading and writing practice coupled with effective instructional strategies have been shown to facilitate kanji learning and retention among JFL learners (Mori et al., 2020).

Studies have delved into the impact of task constraints on writing Japanese as JFL learners' kanji use strategies during writing tasks. Constraints such as time limitations and topic specificity can influence learners' approaches to kanji use (Sara & Diner, 2022). Additionally, research highlights the importance of employing various learning strategies, both direct and indirect, to enhance kanji mastery among Japanese language learners (Matsuda, 2021). Furthermore, investigations into the relationship between strategy use and effectiveness in kanji learning have been conducted, shedding light on learners' perceived effectiveness of kanji learning strategies (Lensun, 2018; Shekarabi & Tajfirooz, in press).

In structured writing tasks such as essay composition, learners may demonstrate heightened focus on kanji selection and integration to enhance accuracy and coherence (Ivarsson, 2018). Research suggests that the number of kanji remembered and used by students significantly impacts their essay writing abilities, indicating a correlation between kanji proficiency and writing performance (Thomas, 2013; Toyoda & McNamara, 2011).

The Current Study

Previous research has illuminated various aspects of writing crucial for L2 learners. Writing development is intricately linked to lexical dimensions such as lexical diversity and lexical density, with higher text quality and proficiency often characterized by the presence of more unique, content-rich, or infrequent words in learners' texts (Friginal et al., 2014; Kormos, 2011; Yoon & Polio, 2017;

Zenker & Kyle, 2021). Given the fundamental role of lexicon in written language and its significance as an indicator of language proficiency, lexical diversity and lexical density hold paramount importance in writing assessment and research.

Concurrently, writing fluency, defined as the ability to rapidly produce coherent L2 text, has garnered attention in L2 acquisition research. Evidence suggests that free writing, as a method to remove limitations and foster the expression of ideas, can effectively enhance writing fluency in L2 learners (Elbow, 1973). Moreover, studies have explored how task constraints such as time limitations and topic specificity, influence Japanese learners' strategies in using kanji characters during writing tasks. Therefore, in free writing exercises, learners may adopt a more flexible approach to kanji use, for example, by prioritizing fluency and creativity over lexical precision. Despite these findings, it remains unclear how lexical diversity, lexical density, fluency, and kanji use is manifested in JFL learners' free writing and how these variables vary across proficiency levels.

Considering these gaps, this study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1. To what extent does lexical diversity differ between intermediate and advanced JFL learners in Japanese free writing?

RQ2. To what extent does lexical density differ between intermediate and advanced JFL learners in Japanese free writing?

RQ3. To what extent does fluency differ between intermediate and advanced JFL learners in Japanese free writing?

RQ4. To what extent does kanji use differ between intermediate and advanced JFL learners in Japanese free writing?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative cross-sectional research design to investigate variations in lexical diversity, lexical density, writing fluency, and kanji use among JFL learners at intermediate and advanced proficiency levels.

Participants

The study included 48 undergraduate students (39 female and 9 male) enrolled in JFL courses at a national university in Iran. Participation was voluntary, and participants provided informed consent prior to the study. Among the participants, 25 were second-year students, while 23 were fourth-year students. Persian was the participants' first language, and their average age was 22 years. According to the Japanese educational program at the university, second-year students were considered to have an intermediate proficiency level, while fourth-year students were deemed to have an advanced proficiency level, approximately corresponding to B1 and C1 levels on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale, respectively.

Data collection

Participants were instructed to compose a Japanese essay on the topic of "Some people are against keeping a pet and consider it a cause of human disease while others are in favor of keeping pets. What is your opinion?" An expository writing task was chosen for two reasons: firstly, it aligns with the conditions of free writing since students are required to express their ideas; secondly, all participants had completed two Japanese writing courses as part of their university curriculum in their first year of study, thereby familiarizing them with such topics.

They were allotted 15 minutes to write continuously, without pauses, to the best of their ability. Consistent with Elbow's (1973) recommendations for free writing, participants were instructed to refrain from reading, editing, or revising their text during the writing period. They were encouraged to maintain a continuous flow of ideas, even if experiencing difficulty in generating content; it was conveyed to them that no additional text could be added once the 15-minute period had elapsed.

As highlighted by Elbow (1973), this approach promotes productivity and alleviates apprehension associated with a blank page, thereby fostering increased writing fluency, coherence, and idea generation. A total of 48 Japanese essays were collected, comprising a cumulative total of 9,975 Japanese characters.

Data Analysis

Lexical diversity and lexical density were evaluated using the Apache Solr 4.0 program integrated with Kuromoji, a Japanese morphological analyzer developed by Atilika Inc. Kuromoji is distributed under the Apache License v2.0 and uses the MeCab dictionary and statistical model, which was developed by Kudo et al. (2004). Kuromoji offers experimental support for UniDic (Den et al., 2007).

For the assessment of writing fluency, the total number of Japanese characters produced by each participant was used. This measure aligns with established conventions in fluency research, as demonstrated by previous studies (Johnson, 2017; Baba & Nitta, 2014; Hwang, 2010; Ong & Zhang, 2010; Sasaki, 2000, 2004; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998).

Regarding kanji use, the total number of kanji characters was tabulated for analysis. Regarding the distinction between kanji and words, if a word is written in kana (hiragana or katakana) instead of kanji, it was counted as a word but not as a kanji. Similarly, in cases of misspelling or incorrect writing of kanji, the word was counted as a word but not as a kanji.

Results

To investigate whether lexical diversity, lexical density, fluency, and the use of kanji vary between intermediate and advanced JFL learners in their free writing, first the normality and homogeneity of variance in the aforementioned data were assessed. As presented in Table 1, the data pertaining to lexical diversity, fluency, and the use of kanji were found to exhibit normal distributions in both the intermediate and advanced groups, and the homogeneity of the variance was confirmed ($p > .05$). To ascertain differences between the intermediate and advanced groups, an independent sample t-test was employed. Bonferroni adjustment was $p > .01$. However, due to violation of the normality assumption in the data concerning lexical density ($p > .05$), a Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine differences between the intermediate and advanced groups in terms of lexical density.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the lexical diversity measures observed in both the intermediate and advanced proficiency groups. The mean

Table 1

Tests of normality and homogeneity of variances

	Groups	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			Levene's Test	
		Statistic	df	*p*	F	*p*
Lexical diversity	Intermediate	.106	25	.200	1.917	.173
	Advanced	.161	23	.127		
Lexical density	Intermediate	.213	25	.005	4.791	.034
	Advanced	.162	23	.121		
Fluency	Intermediate	.154	25	.128	3.397	.072
	Advanced	.124	23	.200		
Kanji use	Intermediate	.154	25	.129	17.581	.000
	Advanced	.173	23	.071		

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for lexical diversity, fluency, and kanji use in intermediate and advanced JFL learners' free writing

Groups	*N*		Lexical diversity	Fluency	Kanji use
Intermediate	25	Mean	181.652	169.760	17.560
		SD	24.879	35.666	12.793
		95% CI	171.38-191.92	155.03-184.48	12.27-22.84
Advanced	23	Mean	205.826	249.173	34.521
		SD	31.125	55.581	24.988

Note: SD = Standard deviation; 95% CI = 95% Confidence interval for the mean

difference for lexical diversity in the writing of the advanced proficiency group was approximately 24.17 points higher than that of the intermediate group. Furthermore, an independent sample t-test indicated a large and statistically significant difference in lexical diversity between the intermediate and advanced groups ($p > 0.005$). (These findings are detailed in Table 3.) Consequently, it can be inferred that advanced learners employed a wider range of vocabulary compared to intermediate learners in their essays.

Using a Mann-Whitney U test, differences in lexical density were assessed between the intermediate and advanced groups. As indicated in Table 4, the analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in lexical density between the intermediate and advanced learners' Japanese essays ($p > .01$). Specifically, the results demonstrated that the median lexical density in the essays of intermediate learners (median = 16.80) was higher than that of advanced learners (median = 12.25). However, this observed difference was small ($\eta^2 = .021$). Consequently,

Table 3

Independent sample t-test results and effect sizes for lexical diversity, fluency, and kanji use in intermediate and advanced JFL learner's creating writing

	t	df	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Lexical diversity	-2.984	46	.005	0.85
Fluency	-5.940	46	.000	1.70
Kanji use	-2.922	32.175	.006	0.85

Table 4.

Mann-Whitney U test results for lexical density in intermediate and advanced JFL learners' free writing

Groups	*N*	Median	U	Z	*p*
Intermediate	25	16.800	134.000	-3.168	.002
Advanced	23	12.250			

it can be inferred that intermediate JFL learners used a greater number of lexical words in their texts compared to advanced JFL learners, particularly under free writing conditions.

In terms of writing fluency between the intermediate and advanced groups, the mean difference between the groups indicated that the advanced group wrote slightly greater than 79.41 characters more than the intermediate group (Table 2). This finding suggests that advanced learners produced a greater volume of text under free writing conditions compared to intermediate learners. In essence, the average number of Japanese characters generated by advanced learners in their free writing essays exceeded that of intermediate learners. As shown in Table 3, an independent sample t-test revealed a highly significant difference in writing fluency between the advanced and intermediate groups ($p > .001$).

Concerning the extent of kanji use among intermediate and advanced JFL learners writing under free writing conditions, the mean difference between the two groups indicated that intermediate learners employed approximately 16.96 fewer kanji characters compared to advanced learners despite both groups being subject to identical time constraints. The results of an independent sample t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in kanji use between the writings of intermediate and advanced learners ($p > .01$). Notably, due to the violation of equality of variances in the kanji use data, the results assuming unequal variance were reported (Table 3).The total number of kanji used by intermediate learners was 439, while advanced learners used 794.

Discussion

This study investigated lexical diversity, lexical density, writing fluency, and kanji use among intermediate and advanced JFL learners in their free writing. The findings revealed significant differences between the two proficiency levels across all variables. Advanced learners demonstrated higher lexical diversity, greater writing fluency, and increased kanji use compared to their intermediate counterparts. Conversely, intermediate learners exhibited higher lexical density, suggesting a propensity for simpler vocabulary and linguistic structures. These results highlight the importance of proficiency level in shaping language

production abilities and underscore the nuanced relationship between proficiency and written language skills in a second language context.

The findings regarding lexical diversity and lexical density in the free writing of intermediate and advanced JFL learners underscore the influence of proficiency level on vocabulary usage and text composition. Consistent with previous research (Grant & Ginther, 2000; Cumming et al., 2006), advanced learners exhibited significantly higher lexical diversity compared to their intermediate counterparts. This suggests that these advanced learners possess a broader repertoire of vocabulary, enabling them to express ideas with greater nuance and sophistication. Conversely, intermediate learners demonstrated higher lexical density, indicating a tendency to utilize a greater proportion of lexical words relative to the total word count. This may reflect a preference for familiar vocabulary and simpler linguistic structures among intermediate learners, potentially due to limitations in vocabulary breadth and syntactic complexity (Durrant & Brenchley, 2019).

The disparities in writing fluency between intermediate and advanced JFL learners' free writing reflect the proficiency-related differences in language production abilities. Advanced learners exhibited significantly greater fluency, generating a higher volume of text within the allotted time frame. This aligns with previous research highlighting the positive impact of proficiency on writing fluency (Yasuda, 2022; Weston et al., 2011). The observed increase in fluency among advanced learners may stem from their enhanced linguistic competence and automaticity in language processing, allowing for more efficient idea generation and expression. This improvement is likely influenced not only by free writing practices but also by the additional two years of coursework completed by the advanced learners. During those two years, students engaged in advanced reading and writing courses that included extensive reading practices, structured writing assignments, and exposure to diverse text genres. Those activities likely contributed to their increased linguistic competence and automaticity by building vocabulary, improving syntactic complexity, and fostering critical thinking in Japanese. Furthermore, students may have participated in activities such as peer editing, intensive kanji practice, and discussions in Japanese, all of which would

enhance their overall language proficiency. Moreover, by encouraging the flow of ideas, reducing writer's block, building confidence, and focusing on content over form, the use of free writing practices may have contributed to the improvement in fluency among advanced learners, as evidenced by previous studies (Hwang, 2010; Maloney, 2022).

The findings regarding kanji use among intermediate and advanced JFL learners shed light on the nuanced relationship between proficiency level and script integration in Japanese writing. Advanced learners employed a significantly greater number of kanji characters compared to intermediate learners, indicative of their heightened proficiency in kanji recognition and utilization. This aligns with previous research highlighting the positive correlation between kanji proficiency and overall writing performance (Thomas, 2013; Toyoda & McNamara, 2011). The observed proficiency-related differences in kanji use may reflect advanced learners' ability to leverage kanji characters for lexical precision and stylistic variation, thus enhancing the overall coherence and sophistication of their writing. Moreover, this finding underscores the importance of kanji mastery in fostering effective communication and expression in written Japanese.

Research on lexical diversity, lexical density, writing fluency, and kanji use among intermediate and advanced JFL in Iran is noteworthy for university educators in Japan. It is crucial to develop effective teaching strategies that address the distinct needs at different proficiency levels. Advanced learners show higher lexical diversity, writing fluency, and kanji use, indicating a need for targeted instruction that would support vocabulary expansion, fluency, and increased kanji use for non-Japanese students planning to live or study in Japan. The two additional years of study undertaken by advanced learners highlight the importance of long-term, scaffolded learning approaches that gradually build on prior knowledge through advanced reading and writing courses, intensive kanji practice, and exposure to authentic Japanese texts. Incorporating free writing as a regular activity in these courses may further accelerate learners' fluency and confidence in written production. Intermediate learners' higher lexical density suggests a reliance on simpler words, highlighting the need for teaching methods that expand their linguistic repertoire and syntactic complexity at this level of

their language training. These findings underline the importance of proficiency-based teaching approaches not only for Japanese language education but also for second language acquisition research. For educators in Japan, applying these insights to curriculum design can facilitate a smooth transition of JFL learners to higher levels, ensuring they are well-prepared for academic and social integration. This study also emphasizes the value of targeted instruction and practice, and suggests further research into the mechanisms driving these differences to refine pedagogical approaches.

Free writing is also effective for self-assessment by teachers in establishing their own competencies and helping to enhance the learning of their students. The assignments will demonstrate clarity of thought, argumentation, and mastery of the material in the concerned subject area, hence giving insights into their pedagogical strengths and weaknesses. This approach is more nuanced than tests, reflecting the teacher's authentic voice and thought processes. Free writing in students creates a low-stress, inspired environment for free creative and critical self-expression (Nation & Macalister, 2020). It allows students to try ideas free from the pressure of formal assessment and, as a result, helps the student better understand the topic and write more fluently. Additionally, it creates confidence among learners about their writing skills through regular habit formation—an absolute must for continuous improvement.

Future research should explore the underlying mechanisms driving proficiency-related differences in lexical diversity, lexical density, writing fluency, and kanji use among JFL learners. Longitudinal studies could track learners' language development over time to elucidate the trajectory of skills acquisition and identify effective pedagogical approaches for promoting language proficiency in a second language context. Furthermore, investigations into the role of individual differences such as cognitive and affective factors in shaping language production abilities should provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between learner characteristics and written language skills development. Additionally, the limited sample size in this study restricts the generalizability of the findings, highlighting the need for further research with a larger sample. Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of the factors

influencing written language proficiency in JFL learners and offers promising avenues for future research to explore.

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Author bios

Zeinab Shekarabi *is an assistant professor in the faculty of foreign languages and literatures at the University of Tehran. She earned her Ph.D. in Teaching Japanese as a Second Language at Hiroshima University, Japan. Her research interests include teaching Japanese for specific purposes, Japanese language writing. She is the corresponding author on this paper and can be reached at Lshekarabi@ut.ac.ir*

Dorna Ebrahimi *studied Japanese language and literature at the University of Tehran. Her research interests include teaching Japanese as a foreign language. dorna.ebrahimi95@ut.ac.ir*

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Research Digest

How to Increase Authenticity in the EFL Classroom

Sara Terre Blanche
Seijo University

Authenticity in English teaching is a much-discussed issue, especially in terms of how authenticity relates to the use of English in EFL environments. Although authenticity in the past has been mainly used to refer to characteristics of texts that are created for use outside the classroom, current understandings of authenticity go beyond this simplistic definition to include concerns about the authenticity of the tasks used in the classroom, the ways both teachers and learners authenticate the language, texts and tasks used in the classroom, and the social beliefs about what is authentic. This paper describes different facets of authenticity and then presents some practical ways English language teachers working in EFL environments can increase authenticity in their own classrooms in terms of each of these facets.

英語教育における真正性は特にオーセンティシティーが EFL 環境での英語の使用にどのように関係するかという点で、よく議論される問題である。これまでの真正性は、主に教室の外で使用するために作成されたテキストの特徴を指すために使用されてきたが、現在の真正性の理解は、この単純な定義を超えて様々な懸念を含んでいる。一つは教室で使用される課題の信憑性、また、教師と学習者の両方がどのように言語、テキスト、課題の真正性を保つか、最後に何が本物であるかについての社会的信念に基づく問題視されている。この調査では、真正性のさまざまな側面について説明し、EFL 環境で働く英語教師がこれらの各側面に関して自分の教室での真正性を高めることができるいくつかの実践的な方法を示唆する。

What most teachers think of when talking about authentic materials in the classroom are materials such as newspapers or films, which are usually not part of the regular syllabus. While materials such as these have often been used as examples of authentic language use, authenticity in the classroom is much more complicated than simply bringing a film or newspaper into the classroom. This paper will explore the idea of authenticity as part of a process of authentication

by language learners and teachers. Broader social ideas about what is and isn't authentic will also be touched upon, and finally how authenticity in the language classroom can be increased will be examined.

Authentication by learners and teachers

The concept of authenticity has come to be viewed as a process rather than a characteristic of a particular text or task (Pinner, 2014; Pinner, 2016; Van Lier, 1996). This process of authentication is characterized by the user granting legitimacy to a particular piece of language, language variety, language text, or language task through recognizing it as a credible, legitimate example of the language. The process of authentication therefore involves issues of prestige and power. Language varieties, language texts, or language tasks that have been acknowledged as being authentic are seen as reflecting the most typical, sought-after traits of the language and therefore gain prestige in the eyes of language users. In the field of sociolinguistics, Coupland (2003) argued that "because authentic things are ratified in the culture, often occupying prominent symbolic positions, they have definite cultural value. They are revered and endorsed as mattering" (p. 419).

An example of the process of authentication might be when language learners view the language used in television programs as being more authentic than the language presented in the textbook. In this case, learners may perceive the television program as being a more desirable model of the language due to its perceived authentic status. The process of authentication can therefore be thought of as both an individual act of perceiving a piece of language as authentic, and an act of accepting wider social beliefs about the authenticity of the language. Broader social perceptions will be discussed further in the section on social authenticity. It should be noted that perceptions of authenticity are subjective and may change depending on the context in which a language learner finds themselves. Therefore, it is possible that the same television program may be perceived as less authentic by language learners if it is presented in the language classroom in short, decontextualized segments.

Language varieties are also authenticated by language users and learners. An

example of this is how American English has become equated with standard, native-speaker English in Japan and is the variety which most Japanese people strive to emulate. This variety has come to represent authentic English for many Japanese people, and it has the prestigious honor of being the model used for compulsory English education in most schools. Beliefs surrounding native-speakerism have an impact on beliefs about what is authentic in terms of language (Pinner, 2019). Therefore, when thinking about the relative authenticity of the language classroom, it is also important to think about how native-speakerism may influence learners' reactions to the language and texts used in the classroom.

Unfortunately, users of language varieties which differ from the variety which has been granted authentic status may feel disempowered by the low status and power that they perceive to be associated with their language variety. Kubota (2016), writing about the difficulties of revitalizing heritage languages, commented that "fixed authentication creates a feeling of shame and reluctance to learn or use a . . . language among . . . youths, who lack the ability to use a *correct* form of the language" (p. 483, emphasis in original). By defining and legitimizing one language variety or aspect of a language as authentic, users of other varieties, as well as second language (L2) learners of the language, can become disempowered because they may view their variety as deficient.

Teachers in English as a foreign language (EFL) environments can help to address this issue by providing students with information about the wide variety of Englishes used in the world today and the growth of the use of English as a lingua franca by L2 speakers of English (Galloway & Rose, 2017). Within this context, use of resources from the students' first language (L1) often occurs, and it is one way that language users may choose to authenticate their language.

Appropriation of relevant linguistic resources from the L2 can occur, as well as reinvention of some of those resources, to better reflect the user's identity. Canagarajah (2013), in his book on translingual practice, gives an example of a dialogue between two businesspeople in which the meaning of the word "blowing" is negotiated and comes to mean that a cheese is off or bad. This word, with its new meaning, is used by the businesspeople in several interactions and comes to be an accepted, normal term in their conversations. This example shows

that authentication can be a very context- and time-specific act. This aspect of authentication is therefore about recognizing a specific way of using language as "a legitimate expression of social identity... [rather than viewing] nativized English variants as incorrect and deficient" (Guido, 2012, p. 221).

Authentication can therefore be both an empowering and disempowering phenomenon. In the EFL setting, teachers can take advantage of the empowering characteristics of authentication by encouraging learners to negotiate local ways of expressing their identities and environment through the L2. By acknowledging the dynamic and context-dependent nature of what people view as authentic, teachers can help learners to envision the possibility of their own language variety becoming authentic.

Social authenticity

Of course, learners as and teachers are situated within the ideologies of specific social groups and contribute to these social ideologies (Ushioda, 2020). For example, Seargeant (2005) points out that authentic English in Japan is often positioned as being outside of Japanese society; it is typically seen to be in the domain of native English speakers rather than something that can occur in a non-native speaker context. Non-native speakers may hold views which prevent them from imagining themselves as authentic speakers of an L2. In the Japanese context, some have argued that "Japanese people may define their continued weakness in English as part of a cultural narrative of Japaneseness" (Toh, 2015, p. 127). Teachers in EFL environments therefore need to be sensitive to the social ideologies surrounding their classroom and not assume that a local English variety or authentic texts drawn from the local environment will be welcomed unquestionably by students.

An additional concern could be the social reality of the classroom and expectations of what teaching should look like. Because the classroom represents its own "valid reality where language is both learned and used and experienced" (Pinner, 2016, p. 167), complications surrounding authenticity should not be dismissed. For example, students may expect language teachers to behave in certain ways and the lesson to follow a certain structure. It may be that certain

"institutionalized educational enterprise[s], and in particular . . . the classroom, force certain ways of speaking [and performing] upon us which prevent [authentic interaction]" (Van Lier, 1996, p. 158). This could be especially true in cultures in which teacher-fronted lessons are the norm.

Nevertheless, since "learners need rich and authentic input and meaningful interactional feedback as well as opportunities to produce and modify output" to successfully acquire language (Mackey, Ziegler, & Bryfonski, 2016, p. 113), teachers should strive toward creating a classroom environment which allows for authentic interaction. It is therefore important to remain sensitive to the existing social and cultural ideologies surrounding the language classroom and remain aware of how these ideologies might affect learner responses.

Text authenticity

Authenticity is equated with the real world, and in that sense texts such as newspapers or films, which have been created for L1 use, may appear to embody authenticity. However, teachers will soon realize that films and newspapers are used in the L2 classroom in ways that often do not reflect how these materials are used in the world outside of the classroom. For example, a film is usually too long to use within the timeframe of a single lesson, so films are frequently cut into manageable chunks. Authenticity therefore depends not only on the origins of the material but also on whether it has been subject to any sort of manipulation. Language teachers may avoid using authentic texts because of the difficulty of the language used, the length of the text, or the suitability of the topic. However, if language learners themselves find a text intrinsically interesting, they tend to tolerate a certain amount of ambiguity ("An interview with Brian Tomlinson...," 2021). Even when full-length, unsimplified authentic texts are used in class, students are often asked to answer comprehension questions and fill in worksheets rather than engage in an activity that more closely mirrors what we would usually do after using such a text in "the real world," e.g., discuss a film or book with friends or on social media.

Authenticity is therefore about more than simply bringing a certain type of material into the classroom. Teachers need to be concerned about how the

materials are used, perceived, and chosen. One way of ensuring that language learners are interested in the texts is to allow them to choose which ones they wish to study.

Task authenticity

On the one hand, language learning tasks may be thought to be authentic if they reflect tasks that are carried out in the world outside the classroom. For example, doing a role-play task of ordering food reflects a situation that we often experience in our lives when we visit restaurants or cafes. This type of authenticity is what Ellis (2003) termed *situational authenticity*. On the other hand, Ellis argued that even tasks which do not reflect real-world situations could have *interactional authenticity* if they elicit the types of language and behavior that are often used outside the classroom. Ellis (2003) gave the example of an information gap task in which students describe pictures to each other to discover differences between the pictures. Although they are unlikely to perform this task in real life, the negotiation skills required are something that could be used in real-world interactions.

In addition to situational and interactional authenticity, the authentic task should be designed so that the students have sufficient awareness of the original context (linguistic, social, cultural, and historical) in which a text would be used, or which a task is designed to reflect (Besse, 1981; Lee, 1995). Authentic texts drawn from one country, such as a newspaper from the United States, may lack authenticity as perceived by students from another country such as Japan, who lack the political or social background knowledge to understand the newspaper articles. This lack of background knowledge will then hamper the degree to which learners are able to express themselves in response to the article. Likewise, a role-play activity on helping tourists navigate a complicated metropolitan train system relies on students having knowledge of the train system used and therefore may be inappropriate for students from rural areas that lack such a system. This is not to say that learners will be unable to deal with novel content. Rather, the point is that content of which learners have little background knowledge will require a lot more pre-task preparation before learners can be ready to respond

to the content in an authentic fashion.

In addition to sufficient contextual knowledge, Mishan and Strunz (2003) and Guariento and Morley (2001) also suggested that authentic tasks should lead toward a definite communicative goal or outcome. Guariento and Morley (2001) argued that a "crucial aspect . . . of task authenticity is whether real communication takes place; whether the language has been used for a genuine purpose" (p. 349) as opposed to having students simply produce "language forms correctly" (p. 349). This aspect of task authenticity helps to define authentic tasks as different from language drills or language practice. When tasks have a real communicative purpose, the students feel a need to use the language to communicate in some way with others, and this output generally leads to a response from the people they are communicating with. It is important to note that authentic tasks allow for a wide range of responses by learners, rather than encourage the use of set phrases or set patterns of response.

How can we increase authenticity in the classroom?

Although authenticity in language teaching is often assumed to relate only to the type of texts used in the classroom, it should now be clear that there are various facets to authenticity, which all contribute to authenticity in the classroom. In terms of text authenticity, teachers may want to supplement existing materials with materials which have not been created especially for L2 learners. This will give them a chance to be exposed to language as it occurs in the real world outside the classroom. In deciding which authentic texts to bring into the classroom, teachers should consider whether leaners have the necessary background knowledge to be able to engage with the texts in an authentic manner, or whether this background knowledge can be easily supplied to the learners. If authentic texts are presented to students without provision of sufficient background information and language scaffolding, this "will likely result in frustration rather than increased motivation" (Zyzik & Polio, 2017, p. 7).

Texts should exemplify the varieties of English that learners are most likely to encounter outside the classroom. These types of texts will help students become

aware of the types of English they are likely to encounter in the present or near future. Additionally, authentic texts should ideally be used in class in a manner similar to how they are used in the real world. For example, needs analyses of Japanese businesspeople have shown that negotiating the meanings of various Japanese and English translations with L2 English-speaking businesspeople and L1 English speakers, both via email and orally, are important skills for international business in Japan (Aikawa, 2014; Lambert, 2010; Nakamura, 2014). Business email threads where meaning is negotiated could offer a jumping-off point for students to attempt their own email writing.

To ensure the tasks that learners engage in in the classroom reflect tasks that they will perform outside the classroom, teachers need to be knowledgeable about learners' current and future needs. A needs analysis of the kind introduced in the previous paragraph can be extremely useful for identifying which tasks are most necessary in the lives of learners beyond the language classroom (Long, 2015). Many educational institutions have students fill in questionnaires about their career paths upon graduation, and this information is usually available to the public for recruitment purposes. This type of data could provide insight into what types of work learners need to be prepared for. While this type of research has the benefit of offering teachers immediate insight into the fields graduates are heading into, it should be emphasized that texts and tasks which mirror language use in these fields are not guaranteed to be perceived as authentic by learners. This is largely due to learners' limited personal experience of working, which influences their beliefs about language use and subsequent authentication of classroom tasks. Tasks therefore need to be sensitively created to provide learners with sufficient background knowledge so that they can perceive the tasks as relevant to their own lives.

A final way of increasing authenticity in the classroom is striving to ensure that classroom interaction allows learners to adequately express themselves. Allowing time for natural chat and small talk in the classroom is one relatively easy way that teachers could increase authenticity. A classroom environment that respects learners' identities by offering learners opportunities to express their beliefs and opinions in the L2 can help to ensure that learners learn how to express their

authentic selves through the L2 (Ushioda, 2020). Learners who can function in various L2 situations but are unable to do so in a way that reflects their own sense of identity are likely to find L2 use demanding and oppressive, rather than challenging but engaging and thought-provoking. A personal example comes from a recent study-abroad program to the UK which I chaperoned. Although students in the program felt that they had lots of opportunities to communicate in English, about one third of them felt they could not adequately express their personal opinions and beliefs. These students all requested that future English language classes at the university include more opportunities for exploring personal viewpoints in English.

Conclusion

The language learning classroom need not be seen as divorced from the real world. Authenticity in the classroom can be increased not only by introducing example texts from the world beyond the classroom, but also by ensuring that what learners are doing with the language inside the classroom reflects how they will be expected to use it upon leaving the classroom. In addition, learners and teachers can authenticate the language that is used both inside and outside the classroom by acknowledging the varied and dynamic nature of language and accepting a wider variety of language as legitimate and valid. The environment in which language learning takes place should also give learners the opportunity to freely express themselves through the L2 in a way that positively reflects and develops their own identity.

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Author bio

Sara Terre Blanche *is an Associate Professor at Seijo University in Tokyo where she teaches English speaking and academic writing, as well as EMI courses on global Englishes and language, power, and discrimination. Her research interests include*

authenticity, motivation, extensive reading, and materials development. skuroki@seijo.ac.jp

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The Impact of Population Decline on Foreign Faculty at Japanese Universities Toward 2040

Christopher Stubbings
Sophia University

Government figures for births in 2022 give a good indication of the number of 18-year-olds who will be resident in Japan in 2040. These figures suggest a steady decline in undergraduate enrollments at Japanese universities, possibly falling as low as 80% of current enrollment. This paper explores ways that the loss in enrollment may be mitigated through recruiting more international students, as well as countermeasures universities may adopt in response to this crisis, including merger, use of more part-time staff, lowering of entry requirements, and raising of tuition fees. There is an assessment of the potential impact that each of these countermeasures may have on international faculty members and the job market towards 2040. There is a list of factors to consider when assessing one's own job security. The paper concludes that the pace of change is largely understood and that those who assess their jobs as insecure should take steps to futureproof themselves with the acquisition of new skills.

Japan's fertility rate of 1.2 is far below the 2.1 replacement rate needed for population stability (McCartney, 2024). A projection submitted to the Central Council for Education predicts that post 2040, the number of students entering Japanese universities could fall by approximately 130,000 from 2022 levels to 80% of total capacity (Lem, 2023). This news will be of concern to many working in higher education, amongst them the approximately 21,000 international faculty members at universities in Japan (Williams, 2019). Low birth rates can be seen across the developed world, but the situation is especially acute in Japan, where a depressed economy has led to stagnant wages, job insecurity and the prevalence of temporary employment (Ito and Hoshi, 2020). The problem is exacerbated in rural areas due to prolonged migration towards cities, with approximately 92% of

residents now living in urban and suburban areas (World Bank, 2023).

The aim of this paper is to clarify what large-scale loss of enrollment will mean for international faculty members as we move towards 2040. After a brief explanation of the problem using figures and projections, there is a discussion of a key factor which may help to mitigate some of the lost enrollment: the diversification of the student base to include more international students. The discussion moves on to consider possible responses to lower enrollment on the part of universities: restructuring; employing more part-time faculty, lowering entry requirements; and/or raising tuition fees. Finally, the paper concludes with factors faculty members should consider when assessing the security of their position and advises those who feel their job may be insecure to take action to make themselves more marketable in a competitive job market moving towards 2040.

Student numbers in 2040

The prediction submitted to the Central Council for Education was based on data from the National Institution of Population and Social Research. The number of new university enrollments in 2040 was calculated by examining total births in Japan in 2022 (18 years old in 2040), multiplying by the predicted ratio of university enrollment, and adding expected international student numbers. The number of international students was predicted to be close to 3% (Lem, 2023). Figure 1 shows that the population of 18-year-olds in Japan almost halved from a peak of 2,050,000 in 1992 (MEXT, 2019) to approximately 1,060,000 according to a government estimate in 2023 (Kyodo News, 2023). Despite total population fall, the number of undergraduates entering university increased from 540,000 in 1992 to 630,000 in 2023 (Nikkei Asia, 2023). With the ratio of university enrollments increasing from 23% in 1992 to 59% over the same period (population of 18-year-olds, divided by the number of enrollees), the increase in enrollment was accompanied by considerable expansion in university real estate and course development (MEXT, 2024).

However, the government had predicted the number of university enrollments will decrease from 2022 onwards, leading to a shortfall of

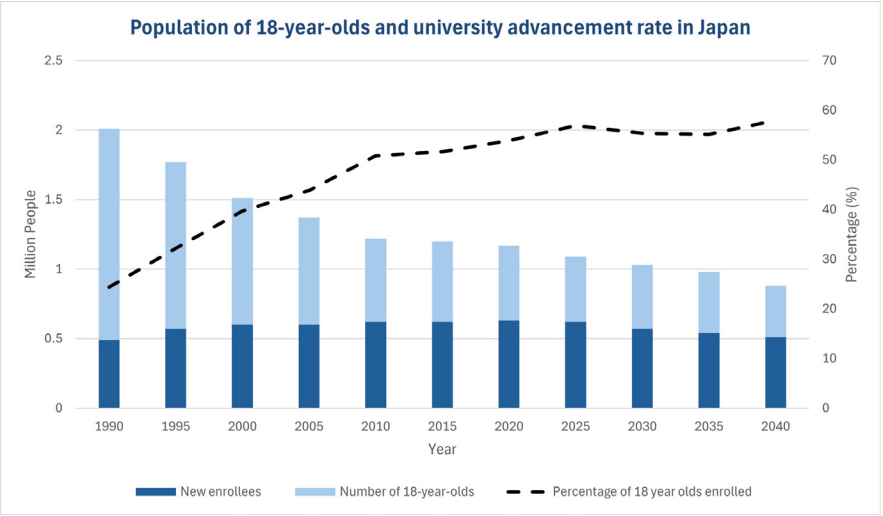

Figure 1. Population of 18-year-old Residents in Japan and University Entry Rates 1992-2017 with Predictions for 2018-2040. Source: Adapted from The Overview of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT 2019: 29).

123,000 students from 2022 levels by 2040, or to around 80% of total capacity (McCartney, 2024).

A further problem is the compactification of population centered around a small number of large municipalities such as Tokyo and Osaka (Hori et al, 2021). Despite efforts to slow the trend of growing cities, rural depopulation has spread to suburban areas and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism has estimated that in 60% of inhabited areas across Japan, population loss will be 50% or greater by 2050 (MLIT, 2018). This would exacerbate an already difficult situation for universities outside of the largest urban centers. The prediction of enrolment levels in 2040 estimated that enrolment would be highest in Chiba, at 86.6% of capacity. Whilst, Oita Prefecture would have the lowest enrolment rate at 70%, followed by Tokushima at 74.2% and Okayama at 74.5% (Yomiuri Shinbun, 2023).

Mitigating Factors: International Enrollment

To counteract the damage of population decline, the Education Ministry stated its aim of diversifying the student base to raise enrollments since Japan's ratio of foreign students is far lower than the 8% average across G7 countries (Osamu, 2022). However, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of international students studying at Japanese higher education institutions (excluding language schools), had been rising year on year with a 65.4% increase in just nine years 2011-2019 (JASSO, 2020). The education ministry hopes international student enrollment will have returned to the level immediately preceding Covid-19 by 2027 and surpass it in the following years (Osumi, 2022).

Recruitment drives will be aided by promotional campaigns abroad in conjunction with Japanese universities and the use of existing alumni networks (Osumi, 2022). An increase in government scholarships coupled with the offer of residency status post-graduation are hoped to further entice international enrollment, with the Education Ministry also announcing plans for greater support of international graduates seeking employment in Japan (Akimoto, 2024).

However, it may be unrealistic to anticipate an influx of international students to mitigate lower enrollment among Japanese. The largest contingent of international students pre-Covid-19 was from China, which accounted for 54% of the international student population (JASSO, 2020), but in the coming years China will be facing its own depopulation crisis (McCartney, 2024). In addition to proximity, a key reason why Chinese students constitute the majority of international students in Japan is shared use of kanji. Were more courses available in English, new opportunities for international recruitment would open. Thus, emerging markets with growing populations have been identified as areas to concentrate international recruitment efforts, notably from India, the world's largest population. Successful recruitment of international students would mitigate some of the predicted enrollment loss. For example, were Japan able to attract international students at the average G7 rate, enrollment in 2040 could be boosted from 80% to 85% of capacity (Nikkei Asia, 2023). Thus, universities would need to take less drastic countermeasures, resulting in a more buoyant job

market for international faculty members moving towards 2040.

The effort to internationalize may be beneficial to the international faculty staff already in Japan. Recruitment of international faculty from overseas currently lags behind many other countries, and universities still tend to internationalize from within, recruiting mainly from the narrow pool of foreign researchers already resident in Japan, who may have advantages in terms of language ability and cultural understanding (Williams, 2019). Additionally, low-inflation and the economic downturn in Japan, have made Japan less competitive salary wise than North America or Europe (Ito and Hoshi, 2020). Many foreign faculty may also feel aggrieved to discover they are required to pay into the national pension scheme, whilst never intending to stay in Japan long enough to recoup their investment. With Japan holding only a few bi-lateral pension agreements, many foreign nationals find that amount of pension contributions they can recover is capped at three-years, regardless of how long they have been paying in (Byma, 2021). Applicants from abroad face hurdles such as language and cultural difficulties, and "procedural hurdles, such as universities that do not pay travel expenses, or interviewers who disregard non-Japanese teaching experience" (Williams, 2019: 2). Therefore, International faculty who already reside in Japan may enjoy a competitive edge as falling enrollment squeezes the job market. However, if Japanese universities really want to be globally prestigious, competitive, truly international, and diverse, they are obligated to recruit a higher quality of academic from outside of Japan. This will open a whole new sphere of competition in an already over-supplied job market.

Responses to falling enrollment

Despite efforts to mitigate the loss, Japanese university enrollment in 2040 looks set to be considerably lower than present capacity (Lem, 2023). A key question for international faculty is how universities will respond.

The future would appear to be brighter at national universities than private institutions. In Japan, public perception of the high standard of education at national universities and the lower tuition fees they charge will likely maintain enrollment at close to capacity, since public trust and low tuition fees represent

good value in a crowded marketplace. Since 2004 national universities have been incorporated under The Japan Association of National Universities (JANU), allowing autonomy in their management, but also bringing financial challenges (Yonezawa, 2023). The need to streamline and operate with efficiency became essential since the government reduced the total budget for national universities by 1% every year, for the years 2004-2014 (Yonezawa, 2023). Funding is now based upon performance assessment, and the meeting of targets set out in a 6-year plan. Due to their prestige, national universities should enjoy a competitive advantage in maintaining enrollment numbers. However, they are by no means immune to budgetary pressure, and must be run efficiently and on-budget.

The situation at private universities appears more perilous. Private institutions make up approximately 75% of higher education in Japan (Williams, 2019). Less-prestigious private universities have experienced a shortage of applicants due to the saturation of the market (Yonezawa, 2023). Since private universities rely on tuition and enrollment fees for 70% of their income (Nikkei Asia, 2023), it is likely that without outside help many of these universities will become inviable as the student population drops. Measures currently being considered by the education ministry for failing universities include reorganization, consolidation, and closure in the worst cases.

Where universities can stay operational, it may be the result of the following countermeasures:

- Mergers and resource sharing
- Use of more part-time lecturing staff
- Lowering entry requirements
- Raising tuition fees

There follows a short discussion of each of these countermeasures and the possible impact upon international faculty members.

Mergers and Resource sharing

The Mainichi surveyed 82 national universities in 2018 and reported that nine were in the process of merging, with a further four considering a merger (Izawa, 2019). Furthermore, in April 2022, Kobe Shinwa Women's University

relaunched to include men and was able to increase its enrollment of freshmen by 47% (Shimokawa and Miura, 2023). Most recently, the state-run Tokyo Institute of Technology and Tokyo Medical and Dental university will merge in late 2024, under the new name "Institute of Science Tokyo." The catalyst for this merger was a government fund aimed at improving the global standing of Japanese universities. This fund totals approximately 10 trillion yen ($77 billion) (Yamamoto, 2023). In several cases, local governments have taken over the running of failing private universities, especially in the countryside (Lem, 2023). This 'local public university model' may be another option where the regional government can see merit in keeping institutions viable in some capacity, to serve the local area.

The boom in higher education in the early 2000s was accompanied by expansion and real estate acquisition (MEXT, 2024). If two struggling universities were able to share resources or merge into a single entity, it would facilitate increased management efficiency and effective utilization of resources (Izawa, 2019), allowing the sale of assets to free up resources and alleviate financial pressure. However, the potential for job losses which often accompany mergers, should be of concern to faculty members.

Use of more part-time lecturing staff

University faculty are employed under two broad categories:

- Tenured employees (*sennin koushi* in Japanese),
- Employees on fixed-term contracts (*tokunin koushi*), who are:
- Full-time, or
- Part-time.

Fixed-term contracts are typically between one to five years in length.

A stagnant economy for over three decades means that salaries and benefits are no longer globally competitive (Williams, 2019). This problem will be exacerbated by the recent slump in value of the yen, at least in the short-term. Of over 21,000 international faculty members, the majority are employed on fixed-term contracts for part-time work (Williams, 2019). Of the approximately 8,100 international faculty employed full-term, the majority are on fixed-term

contracts rather than being tenured employees (Williams, 2019). Furthermore, of these 8,100, approximately two-thirds are ethnically Korean or Chinese, and may have been born and educated in Japan rather than being recruited internationally (Williams, 2019). Thus, many international faculty at universities in Japan remain on short-term contracts, with a requirement to renew or move institution every few years. Of these, a disproportionate number are women, younger academics, those without a PhD, or those working in TESOL-related fields (Larson-Hall and Stewart, 2018). For these workers job security is minimal since when the contract expires, they must apply for another at their current institution or compete for a job elsewhere.

Due to the proliferation of fixed-term contracts, individual universities preserve the ability to shrink or close departments as needed. Thus, they are not overburdened by redundancy payments and can act with flexibility to meet market needs (Itakura, 2021). This flexibility should be cause for reflection for faculty in this position. A fixed term position on a limited period rolling contract is precarious. Given the problems that universities face over the coming years, those in this type of position should heed the warning that the contract they have been signing every year may not be there forever and take steps to improve their marketability in the future by acquiring qualifications and skills.

Lowering entry requirements

It seems unlikely that lowering entry requirements will be a viable countermeasure to falling enrollment. Preserving the integrity of higher education in Japan is part of MEXT's remit and they are concerned that some private universities, facing low enrollment, may adopt more flexible admission policies by lowering entry requirements to appeal to a greater number of high school graduates. However, MEXT dissuades such policy changes, urging private universities to establish quality assurance systems for the provision of high-quality education (MEXT, 2022). In the future, the national university model of performance related funding may be applied in the public sector, with the implication that public funding will only be available to private universities that increase the quality of the education they offer (Yonezawa, 2023).

Raising tuition fees

The operational budgets of private universities have been supported by the central government since the 1970s (Yonezawa, 2023), and some argue they have been underfunded. At 4.1% of GDP in 2022 (OCED, 2023), Japan spends less on education than many developed countries. This compares with an average of 5.1% across OECD countries (OCED, 2023). Since 2005, the standard tuition fee for national universities has been maintained at 817,800 JPY (Yonezawa, 2023). Tuition fees at private universities, set by the universities themselves, have also barely changed since 2005 (averaging 1,357,080 JPY in 2021). When compared with the rapid increase of tuition fees in the US, the UK, Australia, and China in the same timeframe, higher education in Japan remains relatively inexpensive (Kobayashi, 2020).

Yonezawa (2023) argues that the central government may be poised to take a more heavy-handed approach to regulating private universities in coming years. It is argued that publication of 2040 enrollment predictions may be the catalyst for tighter government control of higher education in the future, and that this could mean a rise in tuition fees across the board (Yonezawa, 2023). Raising tuition fees as a countermeasure to lower enrollment will only be effective if it is implemented across all institutions. Were tuition fees to rise, some of the budgetary pressure universities operate under may be released. Bigger budgets may reduce the need for some of the more drastic countermeasures discussed above. There may be a knock-on effect in improving the job security of international faculty members. However, it will be difficult to strike the correct balance, as a rise in fees could also discourage enrollment further, especially when considering the economic stagnation of recent decades.

The Job Market in 2040: Will my job still exist?

The key concern of this paper is the future job security of the approximately 21,000 international faculty members at Japanese universities. A loss of up to 20% of new enrollments will be significant, and the extent to which this can be mitigated by increased international student enrollment is unclear. Drastic countermeasures may need to be taken. These range from closures and mergers to

tuition fee rises and the use of more part-time staff. The good news is that looking at the number of births in 2022 gives a good indication of the pace of change. A fall of 120,000 averaged over 18 years (2022-2040) equates to a decrease of 6,666 students per year. This represents slightly more than 1% of 2022 enrollee numbers. If international recruitment drives are successful, this number would be even lower. Therefore, any decline will be gradual.

Additionally, those with a good working proficiency in English may enjoy an advantage in the coming decades. Since the primary language of instruction at Japanese universities is Japanese, a language with relatively few speakers outside Japan, internationalization of Japanese universities requires that more courses will be taught in foreign languages, notably English. At present the practice of recruiting from within Japan gives an advantage to those already in residence. Many international faculty members who teach TESOL-related subjects may have a role in developing the use of English in other faculty courses.

How can I protect myself?

Any teacher looking for job stability in the future should consider their current employment status. There are many factors to consider, contract status, national or private university, university location, and the prestige of an institution. Table 1 is a breakdown of the questions international faculty should be asking to assess their employment status before the expected drop in enrollment leads to a downturn in the job market.

In 2040, the number of university teaching positions can be expected to decrease in line with lower enrollment. This may result in an increasingly competitive job market. Individuals must take responsibility for their own marketability in the future. This means taking stock of one's own situation and futureproofing oneself by acquiring new skills, embracing new technology, and adapting to the market. For those living outside of urban centers, there may be a need to travel further afield for work or be open to relocation.

As education becomes increasingly digital, technical literacy will be an essential component of a faculty member's job in the future. Teachers should be skilled in online learning platforms, collaboration tools and multimedia

Table 1

Factors Determining Future Job Security for International Faculty Employees in Japan

Self-reflection questions
Tenure or rolling contract? Rolling contracts have an expiry date. Tenure offers security and redundancy should an institution be forced to close.
National or private university? National universities may have an advantage in future enrollment over private universities, although strict management means they are not immune from mergers or consolidation of departments.
Urban or rural area? Despite government policy geared towards decentralization, it is likely that universities in rural areas will suffer the biggest student losses.
Prestigious institution? Whether national or private, the universities which consistently place highest in the ranking tables will have a competitive advantage as the student pool shrinks. Higher education rankings are available in English at: www.timeshighereducation.com/rankings/japan-university/2023
Prestigious department? University departments which can carve out a niche to specialize in, may be able to maintain a stable student base.

resources. Those who demonstrate the adaptability to embrace new teaching methods and technologies will be able to stay relevant and effective. In addition, knowledge of Japanese culture and language may help faculty who already reside in Japan to stave off competition coming in from other countries. Finally, Japanese universities often prioritize hiring faculty by number and quality of their publications. For a number of reasons, this is a measure of the significance of the individual's contribution in their field. It can impact the reputation and ranking of an institution, and in some cases research grants and funding opportunities are dependent upon an individual's publication record. For these reasons, regular publication is linked to marketability, and this may be even more necessary in an uncertain future.

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Author bio:

Christopher Stubbings *is currently lecturing at Sophia University, teaching English CLIL classes in Law and History. Research interests include intense motivated states, how they occur naturally and how to recreate them in the classroom. christopherstubbings@gmail.com*

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Exploring the Efficacy and Challenges of Flip in English Language Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Soren Leaver
Nakamura Gakuen University

This research paper examines the use of Flip as an instructional tool for English language learners during the COVID-19 pandemic in Japan. In this study, I investigated the level of difficulty experienced by participants, the number of completed assignments, the extent of video interaction, and the effectiveness of Flip in enhancing English language proficiency. My findings reveal Flip's capacity to foster peer interaction while underscoring its limitations as a tool for learners facing challenges in blended learning environments.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 compelled educational institutions across Japan to adapt rapidly. Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) mandated the temporary closure of schools below the secondary level (MEXT, n.d.). As the pandemic persisted, public and private universities transitioned to remote instruction.

This sudden shift posed logistical challenges. First, educators and students needed to establish effective online communication methods. Second, the digitization of course materials and their seamless transmission became imperative. Educators and students harnessed video conferencing applications like ZOOM and Google Meet to facilitate online interactions. Simultaneously, they adopted learning management systems such as Moodle, Manaba, and Google Classroom for digitizing and sharing course content. Flip, a video-sharing website, emerged as a unique platform enabling learners to create and exchange video-based assignments.

This study explores the experiences of 218 non-English majors from three

universities in Fukuoka Prefecture who used Flip during the 2020 academic year. This study examined the following questions.

Do students perceive Flip as:

1. A resource for engaging with course material?
2. A means of nurturing connections with peers?
3. An effective technology for navigating the course?

Originally named Vidku in 2014 and rebranded as Flipgrid in 2016 (How Flipgrid changed its name to Flip, now offers free education, 2022, August 29), researchers have used the application known as Flip since 2022 in EFL classrooms for various purposes, resulting in diverse outcomes. McClure and McAndrews (2016) underscored Flip's role as a video response tool for out-of-class assignments, complementing in-class learning by enabling students to respond to prompts or questions, enhancing reflective development and public speaking skills. Green and Green (2018) found that students perceived Flip as a user-friendly technology for English-speaking assignments outside class. Moreover, it emerged as a tool in mitigating communication anxiety, as a majority of students reported heightened confidence in spoken English. Edwards and Lane (2021) provided a nuanced perspective, revealing diverse student reactions to Flip. While some found it easy to use and enjoyable for peer interaction, others grappled with technical glitches and experienced embarrassment when posting videos. Despite these challenges, Flip emerged as a valuable asset for facilitating student interactions, enhancing language skills, and deepening students' understanding of classmates.

To investigate variables similar to those explored in the aforementioned studies, I adopted aspects from The Model for Engaging the Online Learner (Bartlett, 2018). Within this framework, I concentrated on three variables influencing online learners' engagement levels. Specifically, I focused on: (1) Course engagement, which pertains to a student's perceived connection to the course material; (2) Peer engagement, reflecting a student's perceived connection to their peers; and (3) Technology efficacy, addressing a student's perceived ability to effectively utilize the necessary technology for navigating the course.

Methods

Participants

The research cohort comprised 218 students enrolled in English conversation classes targeting CEFR A1 and A2 levels (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR], n.d.). Instruction for these classes occurred via ZOOM or on-demand video, conducted once a week in 90-minute sessions. The curriculum spanned 15 weeks and encompassed six units from the course textbooks *Four Corners Student's Book 1* and *Four Corners Student's Book 2*. Additionally, students received weekly assignments and completed two progress tests.

Flip

Flip, an accessible and cost-free video-sharing platform, provided participants with the means to engage in English language practice. Participants joined Flip groups corresponding to their English conversation classes. Over the semester, the instructor posted 12 assignments to each Flip group. Flip assignments featured questions requiring video responses, with each one being limited to three minutes. Responses had to be in English, incorporating vocabulary and grammar from the previous week's lesson. Moreover, each response had to be posted within five days of the respective class session, becoming visible to the instructor and fellow group members once uploaded.

Survey Administration and Design

At the conclusion of the semester, participants voluntarily completed a bilingual survey (available on request) using a Google Form. This survey was designed to capture participants' subjective experiences and opinions. Most survey items employed a tripartite response structure to facilitate comprehensive feedback. The first two response options presented participants with choices embodying opposing sentiments (e.g., "easy/difficult" or "enjoyed/hated"). In contrast, the third option provided an open-ended space for participants to articulate their thoughts in their native language. Participants were encouraged to utilize their native language when opting for this third response type.

Subsequently, these responses were translated into English using Google

Translate during the data analysis phase. These translated responses were categorized into thematic topics, affording a nuanced comprehension of participants' perspectives and insights regarding their interactions with Flip.

Results

In total, 218 students completed the primary and follow-up questions of the survey. Among the open-ended inquiries, the highest response count was 126 as seen in Figure 1 and Table 1.

In Figure 1, the horizontal axis represents categories related to the usage of Flip. *Ease of Use* indicates that 57% of respondents found Flip easy to use. *Completion Rates* reflect that 71% of participants completed more than half of the Flip assignments. *Peer Videos Viewed* indicates that 87% of respondents watched their peers' videos before creating their own. *Challenges* suggest that 68% of participants experienced difficulties in expressing themselves effectively on Flip. *Preference for In-Person Practice* shows that 62% of respondents favored

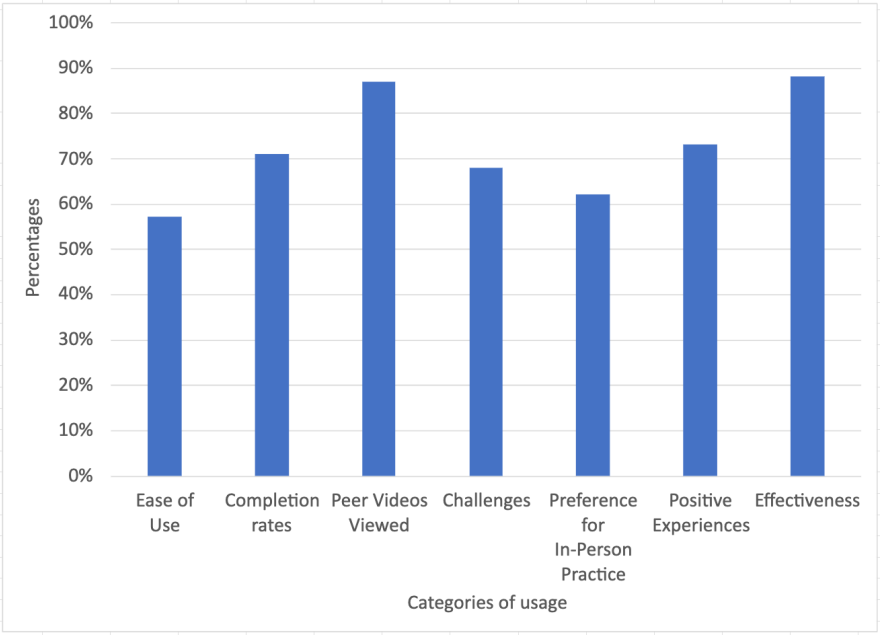

Figure 1. Flipgrid usage responses.

Table 1

Open-Ended Questions

	Tech problems	English level	Other	
What was difficult about Flip?	44%	48%	8%	
	Utility	Curiosity	Entertainment	
Why did you watch other student's videos?	86%	12%	3%	
	English level	Confidence	Tech problems	Other
What difficulties did you have expressing yourself on Flip?	71%	13%	8%	9%
	Joy	Convenience	Relatability	Other
Why do you prefer making a Flip video over speaking to a classmate in English?	11%	47%	31%	11%
	Interactivity	Meaning	Joy	Stimulation
Why do you prefer speaking to a classmate in English over making a Flip video?	39%	35%	19%	6%
	Sociability	Viewpoint diversity	Utility	Expression/ other
What did you enjoy about Flip?	29%	16%	24%	31%
	Exposure	Difficulty	Other	
What did you hate about Flip?	46%	46%	8%	

in-person English practice over using Flip. *Positive Experiences* indicates that 73% of participants reported enjoying their Flip experience. Finally, *Effectiveness* demonstrates that 88% of respondents considered Flip an effective tool for practicing English.

Responses to the survey's open-ended questions highlighted that a significant portion of students, 48%, faced difficulties primarily related to their English proficiency when using Flip. An instance of a translated response conveying this sentiment was, "I'm not good at thinking about sentences." Additionally, 86% of the students watched other students' videos for their utility. A frequently echoed translated phrase that conveys this sentiment was, "To help make my video." Expressing themselves on Flip was found to be challenging for the majority, with 71% attributing this difficulty to their English proficiency. Convenience was a significant factor, with 47% of the students preferring to make a Flip video over engaging in direct English conversations with their classmates. Finally, 31% of respondents found Flip satisfying because of its potential for personal expression, while 46% had concerns regarding potential exposure. Among those concerned about exposure, numerous translated responses featured the word "embarrassed."

Discussion

The findings from the survey shed light on students' perceptions of Flip as a versatile tool for English language learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. First, the data illustrates that students perceive Flip as a robust resource for engaging with course material, as evidenced by the high assignment completion rate and the active involvement of most students. Notably, many participants expressed that watching their peers' videos before creating their own helped them prepare their responses and foster a sense of camaraderie within the class, emphasizing the platform's role in nurturing connections with peers.

The survey also highlighted several challenges encountered by students, such as difficulties stemming from inadequate English proficiency, self-confidence issues, and technical impediments. Furthermore, while students preferred in-person English practice over Flip, those who reported positive experiences emphasized its role in improving their English language skills, promoting peer

interaction, and providing a forum for self-expression. On the other hand, students who reported negative experiences cited feelings of embarrassment, discomfort, and technical issues. Despite these challenges, the consensus among the participants was that Flip remains an effective technology for navigating the course, indicating its significance in facilitating English language learning despite the difficulties encountered.

A phased approach could address the challenges students experienced with embarrassment and technical issues, starting with audio-only Flip assignments at the beginning of the semester before gradually incorporating video assignments. This approach aims to familiarize students with the technological aspects of Flip and foster a more comfortable environment for interaction with their classmates.

The participants were from three universities, so the results cannot be readily extrapolated to broader demographics. For example, the technological challenges experienced by the participants in this study may differ from those encountered by individuals in different countries or with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that Flip may not be an optimal solution for learners with limited English proficiency, self-confidence concerns, or technical constraints. Providing details about the setting, participants, and observed phenomena might enhance transferability. Such information can help readers evaluate how this case might relate to their circumstances.

Conclusions

This study sheds light on the effectiveness of Flip as an English language learning tool during the COVID-19 pandemic in Japan, particularly in the context of three variables: course engagement, peer engagement, and technology efficacy.

One of Flip's notable strengths is its capacity to foster peer interaction and enhance students' enjoyment of language learning. Moreover, the high rate of assignment completion observed in this study suggests that students' perceived connection to the course material is substantial, an essential aspect of course engagement.

However, the study also highlights the emergence of technical issues as a concern. These issues introduced a diverse perspective on students' ability

to effectively use the necessary technology for navigating the course, a critical dimension of technology efficacy. Additionally, a notable portion of participants preferred in-person practice, underscoring the value of physical classroom interactions for certain learners. Future research and educational strategies should consider these factors to create a more comprehensive and effective language-learning experience for students.

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Author Bio

***Soren Leaver**, a native of the United States, has served as an EFL lecturer at multiple universities in Kyushu since 2015. He has a Master's degree in TESOL from Anaheim University and enjoys exploring the integration of technology to enhance teaching and learning processes. sorenzo1@yahoo.com*

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A Task-Based Approach to On-Demand Lessons: Connecting Theory to Practice

William Todd
Toita Women's College

This paper outlines how instructors can incorporate Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) methodology into on-demand language learning formats to enhance communicative competence. While on-demand learning offers flexibility and accessibility, instructors may struggle to integrate the format with methodologies like TBLT. By incorporating principles such as task authenticity, meaningful interaction, and reaching a defined outcome, instructors can transform on-demand lessons into communicative learning experiences. This paper discusses how to adapt TBLT principles to on-demand lessons, emphasizing the design of tasks that promote real-world communication, negotiation of meaning, and collaboration among learners. Through the application of TBLT methodology, on-demand language learning platforms can become more engaging, interactive, and effective in promoting communicative competence.

この論文は、タスク中心の言語教育（TBLT）メソッドをオンデマンド形式の語学学習に取り入れ、コミュニケーション能力を向上させる方法を概説しています。オンデマンド学習は柔軟性とアクセスのしやすさを提供しますが、TBLTのようなメソッドとの統合に苦労することがあります。タスクの真実性、意味のある相互作用、明確な成果の達成といった原則を取り入れることで、オンデマンド授業をコミュニケーション中心の学習体験に変えることが可能です。この論文では、TBLTの原則をどのようにオンデマンド授業に適応させるかを議論し、現実世界でのコミュニケーション、意味の交渉、学習者間の協力を促進するタスクの設計に焦点を当てています。TBLTメソッドを適用することで、オンデマンドの語学学習プラットフォームは、より魅力的でインタラクティブかつ効果的にコミュニケーション能力の向上に貢献できるようになります。

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) created school guidelines to prevent

the spread of infection and guarantee the safety and well-being of students and staff while maintaining the continuity of education (MEXT, 2020). One major guideline was the implementation of online learning options in schools. These options include real-time online lessons and "on-demand" lessons, allowing students to access materials and complete assignments asynchronously.

Asynchronous lessons are rather popular with higher education Japanese students (Iwasaki & Konda, 2024). Such students prefer the on-demand format for a number of reasons: learners can study at a convenient time, complete assignments at their own pace and spend more time with the lesson (Iwasaki & Konda, 2024). However, lesson plans that are successful in person do not always work in an online context (Baralt & Morcillo Gómez, 2017). Instructors may find it necessary to recontextualize their lesson plans. Particularly, on-demand lessons may prove difficult for language instructors who aim to utilize communicative methodologies such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

Review of TBLT

The foundation of TBLT is "tasks". These are communicative activities that have been defined in a variety of ways over the years, but Ellis et al. (2019: 10) offer a concise definition according to a few criteria:

- The primary focus is on meaning.
- There is some kind of gap.
- Learners rely mainly on their own linguistic and non-linguistic resources.
- There is a clearly defined communicative outcome.

This means that learners rely on their language rather than focusing on grammar to engage in meaningful communication. There must be a goal and some degree of sharing information. Overall, there is a focus on authentic meaning and communication in tasks which may be challenging to accomplish in a format like on-demand lessons which prioritize individual learning and flexibility over real-time interaction. Without the immediacy of feedback or peer interaction, learners may struggle to engage with one another authentically. As a result, language instructors must find innovative ways to adapt communicative language teaching principles to the on-demand learning environment to ensure

that learners have ample opportunities for meaningful interaction despite such limitations. The following demonstrates how instructors can integrate core TBLT principles and strategies in online asynchronous lessons to offer a structured approach to designing on-demand TBLT lessons.

Task Design for On-Demand Classes

The standard framework of a TBLT lesson consists of three phases: pre-task, task, and post-task (Ellis et al., 2019). When planning a task sequence, the instructor should first select the lesson's topic (e.g., sports, drug abuse, global warming) and determine a suitable task (Willis & Willis, 2007). While the range of potential topics is vast, tasks must adhere to the previously established criteria.

An important aspect of creating tasks is deciding on the task's outcome or goal. For example, if the topic is traveling, an instructor may task learners with planning a trip in groups. A suitable outcome for this task may be designing a trip itinerary. In this situation, learners practice negotiating a knowledge gap utilizing their own language and producing an outcome. This satisfies the required criteria.

After deciding on the task, instructors should determine the platform through which learners will submit their output. The first thing to consider is the specific language skill focus: writing, reading, listening, or speaking. For instance, if the task involves speaking and listening skills, learners might give an opinion on a topic through a video. An instructor may choose from platforms like Loom or YouTube for video submission. For tasks requiring only audio, applications like VoiceThread or Vocaroo may be more appropriate. Tasks focusing on written output might involve submitting essays or reports through platforms such as Google Docs, Google Classrooms, or Microsoft Word Online.

After deciding the target skill and the platform, instructors must consider whether learners will interact with external materials or not. Willis and Willis (2007) suggest utilizing real websites or other authentic online material for tasks as well. By utilizing material from outside the class, such as news websites, blogs, social media, or other similar online material, learners engage with authentic language written for the purpose of communication rather than classroom

instruction. As for listening tasks, rather than blogs or articles, a task might require learners to engage with authentic online materials such as YouTube videos or audio recordings. However, it is important that materials maintain reasonable authenticity and do not oversimplify language for learners (Gilmore, 2007; Field, 2008). Using authentic listening materials exposes learners to aspects of language that are vital for developing listening skills, such as the natural flow of speech and a variety of accents (Gilmore, 2007), as well as natural speech patterns and vocabulary used in everyday contexts (Field, 2008; Treve, 2023). However, because the instructor is not present with the learners, they must be sure that the materials are appropriate for learners in regards to their language proficiency, cultural awareness, and maturity (Treve, 2023).

Tasks can integrate external material in a variety of ways. For example, a task might require searching a site for particular information (information gap), collecting it, and consulting with peers through a platform (e.g., Google Classrooms or a blog) to reach an outcome such as making a group decision, summarizing the material, forming opinions on the material, sharing different sets of information, or even creating comprehension questions for other learners (Willis & Willis, 2007). For low-proficiency learners, instructors may be more comfortable with input-based tasks, which focus on more passive listening or reading skills and are successful with even complete beginners (Shintani, 2016). In these tasks, learners perform an action according to what they have comprehended without relying on productive language skills like reading and speaking (Shintani, 2016). In the case of an on-demand lesson, an input-based task may require learners to watch an instructional video or read some instructions and then follow through with the directions. For instance, if the material instructs learners to take a picture of a particular object, they would accomplish this by taking the picture according to the instructions and uploading it on a platform like Google Classrooms. In an on-demand format, how the learners will accomplish tasks based on external materials depends on the platform and the task type.

When considering the platform and materials for a task, the instructor must also consider the level of privacy. This depends on the desired outcomes

and the degree of interaction between learners. For example, a private task may involve recording a personal reflection using an app like Loom, which provides a link to learners that they may share selectively. A more interactive task might require learners to post on Google Classroom for all the class to see, allowing peer feedback or responses. The more public the platform, the more caution instructors should take in guaranteeing the safety of learners. Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and X may be more accessible or convenient for learners, but they also pose potential risks, such as the exposure of personal data (Marín et al., 2023).

Alternatively, instructors may choose not to have learners engage with one another or with online material. Perhaps the instructor feels learners are not ready to engage with news articles and YouTube videos. In this case, the instructor might provide the materials or not use materials at all. Examples of the latter include asking learners for their opinion on a matter, having students describe something, or sharing some kind of information that they already possess, such as facts about their hometowns. These all involve information gaps that require a meaningful exchange of language and may serve as tasks (Ellis et al., 2019). For an example of a task involving teacher-provided materials, Willis and Willis (2007) suggest sending a chain of emails with one email missing. Learners read the emails and write their own that could function as the missing email in the chain. However, instructors risk compromising the materials' authenticity when utilizing teacher-prepared material. For this example, an instructor may use authentic emails exchanged with colleagues after receiving permission, as it guarantees that the language is not edited for learners. In this way, learners respond meaningfully to authentic material without the need to engage with other learners or external materials.

Next, the instructor must consider the pre-task, which primes learners for the topic in general, appropriate vocabulary, and the content of the main task, as well as modeling how to accomplish the task (Willis & Willis, 2007). For an online environment, Baralt and Morcillo Gómez (2017) suggest starting a pre-task phase by sending learners a video as a model for the task as well as clearly detailed written instructions. Besides outlining the task, the instructor should

send technical instructions regarding how to use online tools necessary for the task (Baralt & Morcillo Morcillo Gómez, 2017). This guarantees that learners will understand how to accomplish the task given to them.

The instructor must also plan the post-task phase carefully. In this stage, learners receive direct feedback on the language forms they used during the task (Ellis et al., 2019). In an on-demand learning environment, the teacher may deliver written or video feedback through the platform selected for the lesson. To reinforce learning, instructors may assign follow-up activities such as homework that focuses on the specific language structures practiced in the task (Nunan, 2004). This step helps solidify learners' understanding and encourages them to apply what they have learned.

Some examples of on-demand TBLT lesson planning come from a fully on-demand Spanish class (Lee, 2016). In this class, the instructor created a class wiki with a class calendar, class resources, and instructions on using the various platforms used throughout the term. Additionally, the instructor created videos demonstrating how to use the wiki and the platforms for the pre-task phase. For the pre-task phase, learners had access to task instructions and the instructor sent videos or recordings for front-loading vocabulary and modeling tasks. The platforms used included Voicethread and Audioboom for speaking tasks and Blogger for writing tasks. Through these platforms, learners wrote blog entries sharing their opinions on Cuba, made audio recordings on topics such as their dream job and favorite celebrations, and responded to other learners' posts with feedback or with their own ideas. Often, the outcomes involved exchanging opinions between learners. In the post-task phase, the instructor gave prompt feedback related to error correction as well as oral and writing skills. Due to the asynchronous nature of the class, the instructor also sent direct feedback to students by email. Thus, despite not being in "real-time", the instructor successfully designed an on-demand TBLT class.

Conclusion

In today's fast-paced world, instructors must continuously evolve their teaching approaches to keep pace with technological advancements and shifts

in educational developments. As new policies and formats emerge, it becomes crucial for instructors to uphold effective teaching methodologies. Even when a learning environment transitions to a format such as on-demand lessons, the core principles of methodologies like TBLT still remain relevant. Dismissing methods solely because of a shift in environment is a mistake. Instructors may integrate TBLT with an on-demand format by ensuring that pre-tasks and post-tasks bookend the primary task and providing clear instructions, timely feedback, and well-structured, safe online platforms and materials for interaction with learners. Through the creative use of materials, instructors can not only adapt to asynchronous learning but also equip students with vital skills for an increasingly digital world. As the future of education continues to evolve, those who embrace these innovations will position themselves—and their learners—for academic and professional success.

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Author bio

William Todd *is a lecturer in the International Communications Department at Toita Women's College in Tokyo. His research interests lie in communicative methodologies, task-based language teaching, and English speaking skill assessment. t-william@toita.ac.jp*

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Doing Replication Research in Applied Linguistics

Graeme Porte & Kevin McManus, Second Language Acquisition Research Series, New York, NY: Routledge. (2019) (182 pp.) ISBN:978-1-138-65735-9 Price: $56.95 (8,552 yen)

Reviewed by William Kuster
Kyoto Sangyo University

Doing Replication Research in Applied Linguistics is designed to explain the importance of replication research to the field of applied linguistics (AL) while also explaining how researchers can go about conducting their own replication studies. Both authors, Graeme Porte and Kevin McManus, teach AL at the University of Granada and the Pennsylvania State University, respectively. Porte previously edited another book on the topic of replication research in AL. This book, *Replication Research in Applied Linguistics*, was a collection of essays from different authors mainly discussing the merits of replication research (Porte, 2012). McManus (2022) also contributed a chapter about replication research to *Instructed Second Language Acquisition Methods*. This chapter is similar to *Doing Replication Research in Applied Linguistics* in scope; however, it is much less in depth as it is only a single chapter of a larger work on replication research in general. *Doing Replication Research in Applied Linguistics* on the other hand discusses the need for replication research and spends most of its page count providing a practical guide to conducting replication studies.

The first chapter, Introduction: Why Replication Research Matters, presents the authors' main argument for the importance of replication research in

AL. They believe that replication research is a vital part of the larger research process because through reexamining and testing previous studies, conclusions are made stronger, and gradually the collective knowledge of AL researchers is made greater. It is in this chapter that the book first introduces the reader to various actual studies for use as a reference. Actual studies are used to illustrate points and to complete activities for the rest of the book as well. This chapter is relatively brief but adequately lays the foundation for the rest of the book without unnecessarily dwelling on the pros and cons of replication research. The brevity of this chapter allows the remainder of the book to focus on explaining the practical methods of carrying out a replication study, such as selecting an appropriate study for replication and publishing one's findings.

The remaining chapters of the book walk the reader through how to carry out a replication study. First in Chapter 2, Finding a Study to Replicate: Background Research, the authors give pointers on how to choose an appropriate study to replicate. A study's continued relevance in the field, and ease of access to the original study's data and materials are given as important factors to consider when choosing a study for replication. The authors further suggest considering if a study has an unexpected outcome and one's familiarity with the study's methods. The final factor the authors mention is the quality of the original source publication while looking for a study. In Chapter 3 Planning Your Replication Research Project, Chapter 4 What Kind of Replication Should You Do? From the Inside Looking Out: Initial Critique and Internal Replication,and Chapter 5 What Kind of Replication Should You Do? From the Outside Looking In, the authors explain how to design your replication. One important point that the authors make at this point is, exact replications are not possible in AL because most AL research is not conducted in a laboratory setting, making it unfeasible to adequately control for all variables. Instead, they suggest doing either a close, approximate, or conceptual replication. Chapter 6, Executing and Writing up Your Replication Study: Research Questions and Methodology, and Chapter7, Executing and Writing up Your Replication Study: Analysis, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion, both focus on how to write up a replication study. How to write up the research questions, methodology, analysis, results, discussion, and

conclusion of a replication are all explored in great detail. At first glance, this section of the book is similar to general how-to research guides. However, the authors focus on elements that are unique to writing up a replication study. For example, they point out that a replication study's research questions need to refer back to the original study. Chapter 8, Disseminating Your Research, covers how to share the findings of a replication. Two main options are presented here: publishing an article in an academic journal or presenting at a conference. The authors' description of the publishing and presenting processes are serviceable though not groundbreaking. Chapter 9, titled Epilogue, briefly reiterates the importance of replication research presented in the introduction.

I was first drawn to this title, because I was curious about trying to carry out a replication study, but I needed a thorough introduction to the topic. One of the things that impressed me most while reading the book is how much material the authors are able to cover in depth in a relatively short page count. This coverage is achieved by being laser focused on the task at hand which keeps the book very practical. As soon as the introduction is finished, the authors waste no time in getting into the nuts and bolts of how to conduct replication research. Another aspect of the book that lends to its practicality is the inclusion of links to actual published studies, both replication and original, for the various exercises in the book. Some examples of activities include reading a replication study and trying to determine which variables were changed from the original study, and examining the results of a study to determine how it could best be replicated. While some might find it troublesome to constantly look up journal articles, the use of real-world materials greatly helps give the reader a sense of what replication research actually looks like. Also, as this book has been published recently, all the links provided were still active at the time of this review.

One potential drawback of the book is that it requires a certain base level familiarity with statistical analysis methods and terminology such as homoscedasticity and normal distribution. This relatively steep learning curve could prove to be a hurdle to any readers who are new to statistical analysis. For this reason, it might be best read after an introductory volume on statistical analysis, particularly one focused on the field of applied linguistics, such as

Turner's (2014) *Using Statistics in Small-Scale Research: Focus on Non-Parametric Data*. Another possible oversight of the book is that Chapter 7, which explains how to write up a replication study, does not include any mention of the literature review. In fact, there are only two brief mentions of literature reviews in the whole book, and neither go into detail. Only mentioning literature reviews in passing could leave the reader to question if there are any major differences between a standard literature review and one for a replication study, and how to best approach writing one. I for one am still curious about literature reviews for replication studies even after reading the book. Perhaps the authors felt that the literature review was basic enough to not merit mentioning, or perhaps they hoped that the example studies provided could be used as a guide. In either case this is a small nitpick that does little to derail an otherwise exemplary resource.

The authors two main goals are to explain the need for replication research in the field of AL, and to lay out the process of conducting replication research so that after reading the book the reader will have the skills necessary to do their own replication. I believe that the authors were able to adequately meet this goal. I found the arguments for the necessity and benefits of replication research to be compelling, and I was even more satisfied with the step-by-step research process that the authors present.

Overall, I found this book to be a very good guide to conducting replication research. I am personally going to use it as a road map as I begin planning a replication study of my own. I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in getting started in replication research. The book could also serve well as a textbook for use in a research methods course in a Master's program. The book has enough content that a whole course could be constructed around it. The only type of reader who I would not recommend read this book is one who is not yet ready to conduct replication research. In other words, this title may not be the best book for readers who are unfamiliar with research or statistical analysis. They may find certain sections of the book to be difficult to get through. However, they should certainly keep it in mind and return to it after learning more about general research methods.

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Author Bio

William Kuster *has been teaching ESL and EFL at universities in the United States and Japan for over ten years. He currently lectures full-time at Kyoto Sangyo University. His research interests include World Englishes and native-speakerism. wthomaskuster@hotmail.com*

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101 EFL Activities for Teaching University Students

Hall Houston, iTDi TESOL (2022) (152 pages). ISBN: 979-8419082793. Price: 935 yen

Reviewed by Adam Pearson
Gakushuin Women's College

Hall Houston's *101 EFL Activities for Teaching University Students* provides a comprehensive selection of activities enabling any university EFL teacher to make their lessons more enjoyable. The book's strengths include its useful structure, modeled on the flow of the school year, as well as its clear instructions, and high quantity, quality, and variety of activities.

The activities in the book are divided into three categories: Getting Off to a Good Start, Maintaining Motivation and Interest, and Ending the Semester Gracefully. This chronological arrangement aligns with the typical progression of a school year, making it easy for teachers to implement the activities as needed. I found this structure more intuitive than grouping by activity style or skill, as is common in other similar titles. It makes the book simple to use as a quick resource for filling a spare 20 minutes of a lesson, but it could also work as a companion piece when planning a semester's worth of lessons.

There is a great variety of high-quality activities here. I implemented several of the activities in a second-year speaking class at a women's university, with approximately 20 class students. The students' TOEIC scores ranged between 420 and 465, and while they were motivated, they frequently lapse into Japanese unless they are reminded to use English. My impression was that the students

responded very positively to the activities. From the section Getting Off to a Good Start, I used the self-explanatory "Questions for the Teacher," which gave my students an opportunity to get to know me better. By permitting and answering some unusually personal questions, I was able to establish a greater sense of trust in the classroom. Additionally, when the students continued to use the question types they had practiced with me to interview each other, their motivation to conduct question and answer sessions entirely in English increased.

"Halfalogue", from the Maintaining Motivation and Interest section, involves the teacher modeling one half of a telephone conversation, after which students write and perform the other half, using target vocabulary and grammar structures. This activity was an excellent way to make the textbook more student-centered and fun. The students' work, related to job interviews, included creative ideas such as their friend starting a business in crime—an imaginative twist not in the original scope of the chapter but effectively using its vocabulary. It was highly entertaining and demonstrated the flexibility of the book's activities, which can be easily adapted to textbook material.

Finally, at the end of term I chose "A Sketch of My Break" from Ending the Semester Gracefully to stimulate discussion of out-of-school activities and end the term on a positive note. In this activity, students think of four things they are planning to do during the break between semesters and draw a basic picture representing each on a piece of paper. They then use each picture as a visual aid to explain their plans to other students. To show them how it works, the teacher first demonstrates with pictures of their own plans. Judging from their eager attention to it, students were interested in my demonstration, which included hot springs and ramen, and I could observe their excitement and amusement in drawing their own pictures and explaining them. Almost all students enjoy basic drawing, and the energy generated from that and my demonstration carried over into the explanations which I observed everyone attempting in English to the best of their ability. This activity and the energetic response I could see from students made for a raucous and memorable conclusion to the term.

An unusual feature for this type of book is the inclusion of tips and advice to

teachers on their professional development and even self-care. Like the teaching activities, these are grouped by time of year and include how to better interact with colleagues and how to keep track of and improve the development of one's teaching ability. This kind of advice is a thoughtful and helpful addition. A few tips such as altering behavior at staff meetings or examining your workspace would be of use mainly to full-time staff, but the majority, such as sharing lesson plans with other teachers and deliberately making new acquaintances around the school, would benefit anyone.

To give further ideas and inspiration, as well as a bibliography of titles on teaching theory and practice, the book also provides a list of recommended books and web resources with notes from Hall Houston on the specific usefulness of each. There is also an appendix of worksheets and some other activity materials, which can be photocopied from the book or downloaded from the publishers' website. I used the downloadable Halfalogue worksheet to help run the activity mentioned above, which saved time and energy. The web resource list also revealed to me David Gooblar's list of teaching tips at Pedagogy Unbound (https://pedagogyunbound.com), which is extensive and which I will be making use of in my future lessons. The depth of reference material in Houston's book is impressive and underscores the author's commitment to his craft and to helping other educators.

I have only a few minor criticisms of an otherwise superb book. While the book can be used as a quick last-minute resource to fill spare lesson time, it would be helpful for this purpose if it contained a few more very short (five-minute) and no-prep activities. Most of the activities require at least 15 minutes to run, and many require some preparation time—although this is a deliberate choice by the author rather than a failing, it should be borne in mind when making a purchasing decision. Additionally, a few links in the book are broken, which is inevitable in a printed text with any online references but which could cause some inconvenience. Some educators could find the activity descriptions a bit text-heavy, and a few illustrations could improve the clarity in some cases. Lastly, while the book has a slightly cheap look to it, it is affordably priced at 935 yen, making it significantly cheaper than many other similar titles, which makes this

point less of a drawback.

These are minor criticisms of a book that overall provides a generous, high-quality and intuitively organized selection of activities. It should have a place on the bookshelf of every EFL teacher.

Author bio

Adam Pearson *has taught EFL in Japan since 2010 and taught at high schools in Iwate Prefecture from 2012 to 2017 followed by positions teaching in private junior and senior high school as well as universities around Tokyo. Currently, he is a part-time lecturer at Gakushuin Women's College, where he regularly teaches writing and speaking courses. ap21uni@gmail.com*

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Technology-Supported Learning In and Out of the Japanese Language Classroom: Advances in Pedagogy, Teaching and Research

Erica Zimmerman & Abigail McMeekin (Eds.). Multilingual Matters (2019). (353 pp.) ISBN: 978-1-78892-349-1. Price: $59.95 (8,764 yen)

Reviewed by Kate Piatkowski
University of Hyogo

As society progresses to be more connected and globalized, new technology in education also needs to meet the demand of a changing world. However, implementing new technology in the classroom can be challenging for many educators. In the field of English language learning, there has been a lot of research on using computer-assisted language learning (CALL) to enhance lessons and make them more meaningful for students. In contrast, using technology in Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) classes has not been researched as deeply. In *Technology-Supported Learning In and Out of the Japanese Language Classroom: Advances in Pedagogy, Teaching and Research,* editors Erica Zimmerman and Abigail McMeekin aim to lessen this information gap with 11 studies from a variety of authors using websites, applications, and software programs to build their students' understanding of Japanese. This book was published in 2019, so the technology researched in the articles is fairly recent with some programs specifically designed for JFL lessons. The purpose of this book is to find the newest

technology that can be used in the JFL classroom and provide teachers examples on implementing various technologies inside and outside the classroom.

The book itself is divided into five main parts along with an introduction and epilogue by the editors. The first three parts focus on technologies that enhance Japanese learning with individual students or in small groups. Parts four and five focus on software and websites that connect students with real-world Japanese language usage inside and outside the classroom.

Part 1, "Technology for writing and reading," includes two studies related to this topic with a focus on individualized learning. Both chapters in Part 1 show how teachers can include individual feedback to students and allow for student autonomy where they choose their own sources of reading materials. Nina Langton's research in Chapter 2 with screencasts is particularly useful for writing teachers. Screencasts are videos for each student of their teacher reviewing their writing assignments where the instructor provides feedback on them through voiceovers and highlighting mistakes. The university students in the study reported they valued the individual feedback they received because it helped them see where to specifically improve their grammar.

Part 2, "Collaborative online learning" explores how students can work together in their second language (L2) online. Using communication software tools like Skype, Google Hangouts, Adobe Connect, and Wordpress (for blogging), university students from 19-30 years old and with a variety of native languages (L1) met online together or wrote to each other and examined their experiences of studying and using their Japanese L2 in Japan. In Chapter 5, Yumi Takamiya and Mariya Aida Niendorf's research delves deeper, examining not only students' discussions on Japanese grammar and vocabulary, but also exploring how their personal identities and understanding of Japanese culture evolved during their learning journey. Since eight of the ten participating students studied abroad in Japan for various degrees of time, perceptions of their own cultures were compared with what they experienced in Japan, leading to changed viewpoints.

Part 3, "Creating and analysis of CALL programs for learning Japanese" focuses on such programs that are specifically designed for JFL classes. The

research ranges from analyzing common vocabulary used by L1 speakers to helping students understand cultural nuances of Japanese. In Chapter 6, Toru Yamada, Takako Sakai, and Cade Bushnell describe how instructors can teach the subtleties of Japanese through a *rakugo*, which is traditional Japanese storytelling by a comedian using only a fan as a prop. This type of humor for an L2 learner can be very difficult to explain and understand, so with the *rakugo* program the researchers broke down the show with short clips and quizzes to test student understanding and explain the humor.

In Part 4, "Learning through online games", Kasumi Yamazaki and Kayo Shintaku utilize online games as a tool for L2 learning. However, the amount of teacher control over content and rules varies widely depending on the type of game. Kayo Shintaku in Chapter 10 found this to be an issue. His beginner Japanese class was learning new vocabulary through an online game he found, but the speed of the words appearing on the screen was beyond the researcher's control. The game was still very fun for the students, but uncontrollable factors, like speed, may cause some challenges depending on the learner.

In the final section, Part 5, "Technology beyond the physical classroom", explores how students create learning communities outside of the classroom where they can use their L2. For example, in Chapter 12, a study by Jae DiBello Takeuchi observed how two students practiced their L2 while commenting on YouTube livestreams with other L1 commenters. Takeuchi noted that online communities such as livestreams allows students to interact with authentic, real-world language and improve their language comprehension. Takeuchi also stated that the students involved in online communities were at an advanced level of Japanese, allowing them to interact with L1 speakers more easily.

In general, this book provided several studies on the benefits of implementing technology into JFL classes. Using videos, websites, online conferencing platforms, and online communities are all unique ways to get students more involved and engaged in their learning. Also, moving from teacher-directed classrooms to lessons with more student autonomy can help learners maintain motivation. After reading the book, I believe the studies are mostly beneficial for Japanese language teachers, although there are a few specific studies that

could be used in other language learning classrooms. For learners who are into self-studying, Kazuhiro Yonemoto, Asami Tsuda, and Hisako Hayashi's research in Chapter 8 provided an interesting resource to work on pronunciation with the website *eNunciate!* (although it is only available through university programs and not as a stand-alone website). For English language teachers, Langton's research in Chapter 2 and Zimmerman's study in Chapter 11 provide a few good examples on how using technology can help students understand their mistakes, regardless of what language they are studying.

While some of the technology used in this book is unique, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, while most of the technology is still fairly recent, some are becoming outdated like the Adobe Connect featured in Takamiya and Niendorf's study in Chapter 5. Many universities provide free cloud-based service accounts for all faculty and students with Google and Microsoft, which include video conferencing platforms for free, making some technology like Adobe Connect obsolete. It is possible that some of the technology may have been chosen due to low costs, free access, or level of accessibility between countries, but it was not clearly stated in the studies. Second, none of the chapters in this book mention the use of artificial intelligence (AI). Especially because AI has recently garnered widespread attention in the educational technology field, many educators are trying to figure out how best to integrate AI in their lessons. Therefore, this book may feel somewhat outdated for those who are specifically looking for ways to incorporate AI. Finally, most of the programs in this book are designed specifically for JFL classes, which means the transference of some of these CALL programs into English classes cannot be done, like the *rakugo* program used by Yamada et al. in Chapter 6. Most of the research is heavily geared towards Japanese university classes and cannot be easily accessed if you are not a student already, so many of the methods might not be as relevant for self-studying learners.

I personally enjoyed reading about the different technology used in each study and I thought the progression of each section was well organized and flowed nicely. However, the writing in this book was also highly academic, which could be a little disengaging to read for some readers. As a self-study learner I had

hoped that I could find some resources for myself to enhance my own Japanese learning, but I don't think that is easily done with the types of programs used throughout the book. Also, as an English language instructor, I am always looking for more ideas on how to better incorporate technology into my lessons. I think some of the technology in this book can be adapted for English language lessons depending on the instructor's needs. The screencast technology in Chapter 2 is one of the more versatile ways to do so in my opinion, because this form of assessment is not restricted to one specific language.

However, I also think this book ultimately provides a better way to understand what students may need in their lessons to enhance in their language learning. Whether you are teaching Japanese or English, students tend to struggle with pronunciation, vocabulary retention, and grammar acquisition as well as communicating in their L2. While this book is designed with the JFL instructor in mind, it is still a great resource for any teacher to gather ideas on how other instructors are trying to address their students' most challenging areas of language learning with the technology that is available.

Author Bio

Kate Piatkowski *has been working in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) field for nine years and recently began teaching in higher education. Having graduated with a Masters of Education in 2022, she enjoys researching educational technology and social and emotional learning. k.e.piatkowski@gmail.com*

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Attending a peace conference the day after a war breaks out

Joël Laurier
Keio University

Thank you to the CUE SIG grant selection team for awarding me the 2023 CUE Member Support Conference Grant. This support will help defray some of my costs to attend the Children as Peacemakers in Divided Societies: Educational Approaches conference which was jointly organized by the War Childhood Museum Foundation (WCM) and the International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE) and was held in Sarajevo on October 9 and 10, 2023. This conference was a game changer for me as it enabled me to network with some of the world's best-known practitioners in cooperative learning, my field of specialty and the topic of my PhD dissertation.

The conference was a collaborative event that brought together intercultural education and peace education scholars from Europe and other parts of the world help find pathways to solutions on global issues related to democracy and human rights. The focus was on how these issues specifically related to children and the impact they have on global societies.

The conference's eventual impact could not be overstated and the need for such a forum could not be more strongly felt than on the first day of the event. The conference started on October 8, 2023, the day after Hamas militants attacked Israel and where hundreds of children would start their journey of living in a war-torn region in the midst of a conflict that will surely define geopolitical diplomacy for decades. As of Feb 19, 2024, reports put the total amount of deaths resulting from this attack at 29,000 people.

The conference's 10 strands covered the themes of peace, diversity, and

education. I presented in the "Cooperative Learning - Facing and Answering the Challenges of the 21st Century" strand. My presentation, titled "Heightening the effectiveness of diverse cooperative learning teams", dealt with social issues faced by Japanese students related to the inter-personal communication gap that had spontaneously appeared at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The presentation described the effects the pandemic era shutdown had on students as they struggled with the technological leap they were to take in their educational journey. More specifically, it dealt with the struggles felt by students in their attempts to deal with their new educational environment and the new social restrictions that quickly arose from this unprecedented halt to the machinations of societies all over the world. The effects of the altered mediums of communication and the limits placed on studying online were explored, which led to the main part of the presentation – the effective use of cooperative learning strategies and practices to develop interpersonal skills.

To demonstrate the particular challenges faced by Japanese students, my PhD research was introduced. Summarizing the literature and classroom observations made in Research Trends in Cooperative Learning in Japan: STEM Teaching vs Humanities Teaching (Laurier, 2023), quantitative data was provided to indicate Japan's lukewarm response toward cooperative learning in comparison to its Asian neighbours. In a first of its kind work, I analyzed works compiled by the International Association of the Study of Cooperative Education (IASCE) Journals, a publication that, until the IASCE's folding in 2021, was the world's largest academic community studying cooperative learning research and practices and sharing its developments. The study consulted 1,082 works published between 1998 and 2019 and analyzed the levels of interest in cooperative learning in Japan and contrasting it to the level of interest in other Asian countries. In this research a trend could be seen showing the Japanese government's reinforcement of its innovative and political approach to education. The results of the research demonstrate a propensity in Japan to incorporate cooperative learning strategies in humanities and social sciences classes over the utilization of the same strategies in STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) courses. The trend is revealing as it shows a Japanese resistance to foreign influenced pedagogy that permeates

in other corners of education and beyond, further solidifying the practice of competition and individual work seen throughout Japan, albeit at a slowly decreasing pace. Furthermore, the study showed a noticeable trend in Japan to view cooperative learning as a discussion tool that could be used in humanities and STEM programs. It was not seen as a pedagogy to develop critical thinking and social skills as it is seen in other countries in Asia.

The final section of the presentation introduced recommendations to help teachers get students to overcome the increasing communication divide that was created during the pandemic. With overwhelmingly homogenous classrooms that are slowly starting to include international students, the issue of communication in Japan is a bit more complex as it involves language issues, student willingness to communicate, and cultural norms. Cooperative learning strategies that require all students to participate, communicate, share information, and praise other class members were demonstrated. A special emphasis was placed on activities created to form heterogeneous teams simulating international cooperation and improving turn taking and simultaneous participation. Attendees were shown how to create groups that cater to individual student strengths and weaknesses, as well as ensuring diversity on every team. Examples provided include the formation of gender diverse teams and, where possible, teams that had included international students. This, in Japan, could include returnees or students who have studied abroad for significant amounts of time, as their experiences give them varied perspectives as well as a higher range of vocabulary which could help other members. The core component of each of the teams is the component of helping each other, trusting each other, and learning together. One facet of team building which seemed to interest attendees was that of joining the highest-level learner with the lowest level learner in the same team. The questions that were asked during the question period showed a good deal of interest in the research presented.

My presentation at this conference allowed me to make connections with other specialists in cooperative learning and broaden my research's reach. The connections I made from this event have given me a new circle of practitioners with which to share information and seek feedback. I also found that there

are others interested in my research and who could help me develop stronger research branches. All this, with the help of the CUE SIG grant, whose support helped make this a very professionally rewarding experience.

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Author bio

Joël Laurier *is a visiting lecturer in the Faculty of Law's Intensive English Program at Keio University and a doctoral candidate at Sophia University. He is a cooperative learning specialist who researches the pedagogy and trains teachers on its principles, strategies, and practices. His current research interest is the usage of cooperative language in Japan, the focus of his dissertation. joeldlaurier@gmail.com*

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The CUE's 30th Year Anniversary Conference in Toyama

Tosh Tachino
Aoyama Gakuin University

I'm new to CUE. I'm new to JALT. I'm new to Japan. After living in Canada and the US for more than 25 years, I was suddenly recalled to Japan due to family circumstances just a few months ago. I came to Toyama because I needed to start a new academic life, and I was hoping to find a welcoming group and friendly colleagues – and perhaps even some new friends.

As I watched people come in on the first day, I was struck by the collegiality of this group. They seem to know each other very well on a personal basis, and the group struck me as a tightly-knit community. Still, I was surprised by how personal both plenary presentations were. Laurel Kamada described her personal struggles, first as a half-Japanese when she was a teenager and then more recently as a stroke victim. It was hard not to be moved by Dr. Kamada in her wheelchair, obviously affected by the consequences of her stroke, yet bravely delivering her speech to the auditorium full of people. She kept a stoic face, but I thought I heard a tinge of lament when she admitted she could no longer continue to work as a university professor. Life happens (yes, even to language teachers). The question might start from cogitating "whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer/ The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,/Or to take arms against a sea of troubles/And, by opposing, end them," but it is ultimately about learning to live with life circumstances and identities you wish you didn't have to deal with and come to peace with them.

The second plenary presentation (on Day 2) was by Julia Kimura, who narrated her personal journey of becoming an academic and a union activist

through the lens of Lave and Wenger's "community of practice." In this theoretical framework, one learns and becomes a veteran member of a community through "legitimate peripheral participation," by doing something that really needs to be done (thus "legitimate") but starting from relatively easy tasks (thus "peripheral"). Her personal reflection nicely reinforced her pitch as director of membership to encourage us to get more involved and volunteer in CUE and JALT: these activities constitute learning, and they are the path to becoming an established academic in Japan. I appreciated her scholarly and analytic assurance that I was doing the right thing by coming to this conference and becoming (just a day earlier!) a reviewer for CUE journals. It also reminded me of my earlier journey of becoming an academic in North America by starting out at a small Canadian conference similar to CUE and becoming involved in their community. There were some highly emotional moments in Julia's presentations, and I saw how audience members responded to show their emotional and personal support.

The other plenary session was a panel discussion by Amanda Yoshida, Adrianne Verla Uchida, Takaaki Hiratsuka, Kie Yamamoto, and Jennie Roloff Rothman. Again some of the panelists shared their personal struggles to start their careers as academics, and how lonely they felt at times, especially during the pandemic. I don't think I have ever seen a presentation on friendship at an academic conference (even though theirs was theoretically grounded as "critical friendship"), and it was a testament to CUE's concern for each individual member's personal well-being.

I did not actively pursue sessions that explicitly dealt with emotions or mental health (e.g. "Investigating mental health and well-being among tertiary language teachers in Japan" by Brian Gaynor and Bob Ashcroft, "Never Alone: How Friendship can be Critical and Reflective" by Amanda Yoshida and Aviva Ueno, "Group Emotions - What they are and why do they matter?" by Nicholas Marx, and "Alienation and teacher well-being: a research agenda" by Robert J. Lowe and Richard Pinner), but even in other sessions, both presenters and the audience did not hesitate to acknowledge and discuss their insecurities, vulnerabilities, and other personal struggles (e.g., "imposter syndromes" in Victoria and James Thomas' "Self-Perceptions of Teaching Capability & Teacher

Identity in Tertiary EFL" generated a murmured agreement). I got the feeling they knew they were in a safe place, and they had confidence in their colleagues to be supportive and non-judgmental.

One might expect such a close-knit community to be closed to newcomers, but they were both friendly and welcoming to newcomers like me. The conference organizers (e.g. Theron, Tim, Fred, Martin, and Victoria) helped me orient as a first-timer, and Julie introduced me to a number of people. Everyone responded well to my overtures, and they included me in their circles of friends. I did not feel alone at the conference dinner on Saturday night, and I was included in two small informal gatherings on Sunday night, a dinner at an Indian restaurant and a drink at a pub. I don't know when exactly I started to feel like I was part of the group, but people treated me as if I had been an old friend, and at times I felt as if I had been speaking among old friends.

The conference, of course, had other content, and I attended quite a few sessions on technology. Russell Minshull told us about his experience of using Screencast to give video feedback on student essays and students' reactions to this mode of feedback. Two presentations (one by Irina Kuznetcova, the other by Jerry Talandis Jr.) focused on ChatGPT, and they generated lively discussions. I have been playing with ChatGPT myself, and I agree with both presenters that we cannot ignore its growing capability and its role in writing, as well as its implications for the changing roles of human writers (My cousin says he would not be working as a computer programmer if it weren't for ChatGPT.) Kuznetcova argued that it is important to address AI use in your classroom from day one even if you disallow it altogether. Your students need to know your stance, rationale, and policy. Talandis Jr. took the stance that it is his responsibility to introduce his students to ChatGPT and teach them how to use it responsibly and ethically. Otherwise, the students will likely meet ChatGPT on their own anyway with no guidance from anyone. Based on my conversations with my friends and colleagues elsewhere, I know ChatGPT scares a lot of people for many good reasons. Regardless of your stance on ChatGPT and other AI technologies, I think it is important to have a public conversation now about what it is, what it does, what it could do in the future, how to use it,

how to control it, etc. so that we will have at least some say in the direction of this powerful technology. I look forward to more sessions on this topic in the future.

Other sessions I attended include Jonathan Hennessy's experience of teaching an English debate class, Theron Muller and Alaa Salem's study on international postgraduate scholars in Japan, Christopher Moddell's techniques to solicit student engagement, and Quenby Hoffman Aoki's reflection on teaching CLIL. I also appreciated the discussion on teacher intuition in Richard Pinner and Richard J. Sampson's session as it was interesting to hear about the intuitions that many teachers in the audience had developed through the course of their careers. Finally, I was glad I stayed for the last session by Jennifer Jorden, who presented her findings from her doctoral dissertation on the relationship between proficiency and formulaic language. I appreciated the care she had taken to collect and analyze her large discourse data.

I definitely made the right choice in coming to Toyama all the way from Tokyo. Before the conference, I didn't really know anybody in the Japanese academic community, and I didn't know any issues that concerned the community. Now I can name some of those issues: underemployment, job insecurity, workload, professional development needs in response to the changing and growing demands on our abilities, relationship with JTEs, and so on. More importantly, I now have more than 20 people with whom I feel I made some meaningful connections, and I wanted to stay longer. I lingered in Toyama on Monday for the optional walking tour. I was sorry that Julie and Martin had to leave at the last minute because of logistics problems, and we were all shocked to see Theron get hit by a bicycle just as we were about to start our walk! So, Kerrie and her dog Red led us (Victoria, Jim, Rachel, Parvathy, and me) to a hilltop with a beautiful view of the city. Kerrie had to leave early, but the rest of us sat down at a café to savor the last hour of the CUE 2023 experience. We parted unwillingly with a promise to see each other again in Tsukuba in November.

Author Bio

Tosh Tachino *received his Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Professional Communication at Iowa State University. His research interests include knowledge mobilization, uptake*

in rhetorical genre studies, and writing and technology. He has taught and tutored in diverse contexts on a range of subjects, including academic writing, rhetorical analysis, informal logic, and classical Latin, as well as Japanese, math, and Spanish literacy in Spanish. toshtachino@gmail.com

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OnCUE Journal, *4*(3), 263-268, 2010.

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