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JALT SPIN Student Research Symposium Proceedings

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Articles

Message from the Editor:

As the first conference proceedings ever for JALT SPIN, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to be both the reviewer and editor for this year's batch of journals. All of the articles are very interesting to read, with a variety of different topics and research development. I hope it inspires more students to research and submit scholarly work to our annual conference.

Our mission as JALT SPIN Committee is to support all students in their journey about academic research, educational opportunities and career paths, mentorship, and much more.

I would like to thank my JALT SPIN committee members, especially our committee chair, Natsuho Mizoguchi, for her unwavering support and dedication, making it possible to create our first conference proceedings. Her guidance and encouragement have helped bring this committee to new heights; we are truly grateful for her leadership.

I am excited about what the future holds for the JALT SPIN Committee. Thank you to everyone involved for your continued support and effort. Finally, a big thank you to all our participants, presenters, and guests. I am grateful to be part of this experience.

Warm regards,

Phil Nguyen
JALT SPIN Committee Member

Proceeding Paper

Can ESL/EFL Speaking Assessment Reveal Learners' Interactional Competence in Real-life Situations?

Wing Yiu Ling

Abstract: Interactional competence (IC) is essential in language learning. Speaking assessments such as interviews or group discussions are often used to assess language learners' IC. However, it is argued that these oral assessments cannot display learners' IC in real-life situations. In this study, conversational analysis (CA) was employed to examine to what extent the mid-term oral assessment of higher-intermediate to advanced-level university undergraduate students in Hong Kong resembles a real-life conversation. It was found that the group discussion was not like a natural conversation but was similar to a collective question-answering speech situation instead. This study gives teachers and test designers insights into how to design an appropriate test and reveals the importance of engaging language learners in authentic conversations in language classrooms.

相互行為能力（IC）は言語学習において不可欠である。インタビューやグループディスカッションのようなスピーキング試験は、言語学習者の IC を評価するためによく使用される一方、 これらの試験は学習者の IC を十分に反映することができないと言われている。本稿は、会話分析（CA）を用いて、香港の中上級から上級レベルの大学学部生の中間試験が、自然な会話とどの程度似ているかについて調査した。その結果、グループディスカッションは自然な会話とは異なり、むしろ質問応答に類似することが明らかになった。本研究は、教師やテスト作成者に適切なテストを設計するための洞察を提供し、授業において学習者に自然な会話を練習する機会を提供することの重要性について示唆する。

Wing Yiu Ling is from Hong Kong. She is a graduate student of English Language Teaching at Akita International University. Her Bachelor of Arts degree was obtained from the University of Hong Kong in 2014. She majored in Fine Arts and French. After several years of work in Hong Kong, she wanted to study English education in Japan. Her research interest is in second language acquisition and interactional competence.

Introduction

Conversation happens every day in every place comprising different participants for different purposes. Being able to engage in conversation effectively is essential to the exchange of information and to maintain good relationships with your community. Conversation can be as simple as questions and answers or what Schegloff and Sacks (1973) called the adjacency pairs, but there lies a more complex system that is fundamental. Schegloff, Sacks, and Jefferson (1974) proposed the model of turn-taking organization by examining natural conversations. Goffman (1981) also proposed "system requirements" and "system constraints, which he found in his talk. We understand that a basic conversation comprises several characteristics: "face-to-face interaction, unplannedness, unpredictability of sequence and outcome, potentially equal distribution of rights and duties in talk, and manifestation of features of reactive and mutual contingency" (van Lier, 1989, p.495).

Although we all know that "face-to-face conversation is the cradle of language use" (Clark, 1996, p.9), Wong and Waring (2021) said, "learning to engage in ordinary conversation is one of the most difficult tasks for second language learners" (p.2). To understand whether second language learners have interactional competence (IC) to engage in ordinary conversation, which is the ability to implement various practices such as turn-taking, communicative practices, or the use of linguistic and non-linguistic resources in actual conversations, Roever and Dai (2021) pointed out that IC assessment is important in language testing, particularly in speaking tests. However, it seems lacking in nowadays' speaking tests as they said, "It seems logical that language tests should mirror this interactive use of language in order to obtain a representative picture of what the user can do in the real world and allow extrapolation from the sample of language use situations in the test to real-world language use. Alas, they do not" (Roever & Dai, 2021, p.24). Many studies analyzed the authenticity between Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and natural conversation to see if this assessment format can actually understand test takers' interactional competence in real-life conversation (Johnson & Tyler, 1998, van Lier, 1989). They tried to compare OPI with characteristics of natural conversation to see if OPI can resemble real-life conversation so that test raters can assess test takers' IC. Sadly, they could not find a lot of resemblance. With the awareness of the validity and authenticity of speaking assessment, there are different response formats now, such as role-play format or group discussions. Peer-to-peer group discussion could be an ideal method to assess learners' interactional competence in real-life situations as peer-to-peer discussions can show learners' ability to describe and elaborate, persuade, agree, and disagree, as well as to manage interaction (Galaczi & ffrench, 2011). Also, compared to examiner-candidate interviews, in peer-to-peer discussion, "the variables of dominance, contingency, and goal-orientation are more evenly distributed among participants" (p. 115). Test takers should have less control and be able to perform as close to a natural conversation as possible. Ideally, group discussions between language learners should be a good method to assess learners' IC, but there are not many studies examining how group discussion oral assessment resembles natural conversation. These are important to teachers and test designers because they aim to assess learners' IC to conduct real-life conversations. If the group discussion oral assessment is actually not natural, then what is the purpose of a group discussion assessment? If it is only to understand learners' linguistic or speaking skills but not conversation or interactional competence, we can use individual presentations or one-on-one question-and-answer methods to do the assessment. In this study, conversation analysis (CA) was employed to examine the turn-by-turn interaction in a mid-term group discussion oral assessment of higher-intermediate to advanced EFL/ESL learners at a Hong Kong university to explore whether the discussion resembles a natural conversation. Then, it further leads us to the discussion of any pedagogical implication of IC instruction and speaking assessment design in the future.

Literature Review

Basic Characteristics of Natural Conversation

Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) found in naturally occurring conversations an organization of turn-taking and summarized simple characteristics in any conversation. Goffman (1981) also suggested the "system requirements" which also relate to the characteristics of naturally occurring conversations. There are some key characteristics in normal conversations. First, speaker-change recurs, which means there should be a transfer of turn from the current speaker to the next speaker. When a turn reaches a possible transition-relevance place, a transfer of turn may happen. The next speaker could be selected by the current speaker, who could self-select, or the current speaker could continue the turn until the next speaker self-selects.

Second, there might be occurrences of more than one speaker speaking at the same time, but the overlap should be brief. There are several reasons for the overlapping, for example, when the next speaker self-selects as the next speaker at the earliest possible transition-relevance place, a short and brief overlapping might occur, below (1) is an example.

(1) 01 Lil : Bertha's lost, on our scale, about fourteen pounds.
02 Damora : → Oh [::no::.
03 Jean : → [Twelve pounds I think wasn't it.
(Sacks, Schegloff. and Jefferson, 1974, p.707)

This example shows us that although Damora selected herself by saying "Oh" in line 02, not until she finished her turn, in line 03, Jean immediately self-selected herself at the earliest transition-relevance place and continued her turn. Of course, it is not a must to have overlaps in normal conversations. There could be no gap or overlap between transitions.

The third characteristic is that turn order, turn size, and length of turn are not fixed. In natural conversation, participants could not predict in advance in which order the participants would talk, what content other participants would contribute, or how frequently any participant would talk (Johnson & Tyler, 1998).

Fourth, there is no topic nomination in advance. In natural conversation, we would not know what topic comes next because the conversation is spontaneous. There should be no constraint on what is being discussed.

Fifth, according to Grice's (1975) maxims, when people interact with others, there are certain principles in force in the conversation, namely quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Within the maxims, we should be informative but not contribute too much, be truthful without saying things that don't have any evidence, be relevant, and avoid obscurity and ambiguity.

The above are key characteristics of a normal, natural conversation. By understanding the basic characteristics of natural conversation, we can understand what interactional competence second language learners need to have in order to maintain conversation effectively.

Importance of Authenticity in Speaking Assessment

Bachman and Palmer (1996) lay out four qualities that contribute to the overall usefulness of a test, namely reliability, construct validity, authenticity, and interactiveness. They suggested that test designers should try their best to strike a balance between these qualities. Out of the four qualities, authenticity is the one that relates language tests to target language use in specific domains in real-life situations. If the test is relatively authentic, test takers' performance in tests corresponds to their target language use in real-life situations. Then, we can say the test is useful to test the target language competence of language learners. Young (1998) agreed that "Authenticity is an important quality of language tests because an authentic test allows us to make generalizations from learners' performances on a test to their performances on real-life tasks in the target language community" (p. 2). For example, suppose second language learners were given a speaking test of their target language in which they were required to do an individual presentation on their own country. The scores from the test would be used to provide information about learners' interactional ability to use the target language to do discussion in class. Such kind of test can be said to be relatively low in authenticity.

Many studies have been done to explore the equivalence of speaking tests and natural conversations, especially focusing on the response format of oral proficiency interviews (OPI). Although advocates of OPI believe that OPI is "a well-structured oral proficiency interview tests speaking ability in a real-life context - a conversation. It is almost by definition a valid measure of speaking ability" (Education Testing Service, 1982 as cited in Johnson & Tyler, 1998), many studies demonstrated the non-equivalence of interview-based speaking tests and natural conversation in terms of the unnatural turn distribution, turn orders, selection of next speaker, topic nomination, etc. (Johnson & Tyler, 1998; Lazaraton, 1992; van Lier, 1989). OPI cannot resemble a natural conversation because it violates many rules of natural conversation that were proposed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson; for example, the turn order is fixed in OPI as the examiner asks questions and the test taker has the duty and obligation to answer the questions (Johnson & Tyler, 1998). This would not happen in natural conversation because normally, the turn order is not fixed and cannot be predicted. Everyone has the opportunity to take or offer the floor. Also, OPI is an asymmetrical talk because the examiner has more power than the test taker. The examiner could control the turn, hold the floor, or decide when to shift topics. Many studies proved that such kind of test format does not resemble a natural conversation, which is not authentic to relate the test takers' performance to their real-life interactional skills.

Regarding another test format – group discussion between language learners, most studies focused on how learners perform their interactional competence in a group discussion (Hardianti, 2016) or the comparison of interactional competence between low-level learners and high-level learners in a group discussion (Doe, 2016; Gan, 2010; Galaczi, 2014). In Gan's (2010) study, he analyzed two group discussions of secondary school students in Hong Kong. The findings showed that the lower-level learners can assist each other through co-construction to find the correct linguistic terms and to express meaning. He believed the group oral assessment format "can authentically reflect students' interactional skills and their moment-by-moment construction of social and linguistic identity" (p. 585). Although the students in the study performed a certain degree of interactional competence, such as other-initiated other-repair to help other participants correct their sentences, the conversation was still unnatural. Their purpose was to answer all the questions provided by the teacher; therefore, we can find utterances like (2) below:

(2)	01	Janice	:	→	((looks at Jack)) We start.
	02	Jack	:	→	((looks at Janice)) We start now yeah.
	03	Janice	:	→	Er::: le:t's question 1.
	04	Jack	:		=Yeah
	05	Janice	:	→	Er::: (.5) do you ((right hand out towards Jack)) (.8)
	06	Jack	:	→	Hah ha (1.0) no (.8) Er::
	07	Janice	:		=Your answer is ↑°no°.

(Gan, 2010, p. 593)

There were four participants in this discussion. The above example was the start of the discussion. Janice and Jack marked the opening by saying "We start" in lines 01 and 02 and they looked at each other. Then, Janice immediately said "Let's question 1" in line 03, indicating that they had to answer question 1 first. Janice only said "Do you" and put her right hand out towards Jack. Then, in line 06, Jack replied "No". In authentic conversation, unless the participants understand each other very well, without asking questions, the next speaker may not be able to understand the context or even select him/herself to be the next speaker. Also, it is rare to see topic nomination in natural conversation.

As not many studies examine the authenticity of group discussion speaking assessment, this study uses conversation analysis (CA) to examine the turn-taking practices to see whether discussion in oral assessment resembles real-life conversation. By so doing, language teachers or test designers may have some insights on what instruction should be offered for language learners and how speaking assessment could be improved in the future.

Method

The present study was conducted at a university in Hong Kong. It was the English for University Studies course, which was a required English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course developed specifically for first-year university undergraduate students with a primary focus on language development and proficiency. The data was collected in a mid-term oral assessment, in which students had to share their ideas and research about the future in a face-to-face group discussion. There are several questions for them to discuss. Students' level of English in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is less than level 7.5. Two group discussions were randomly chosen by the course instructor, and audio and video data were collected. During the discussion, students were given 12 minutes for the discussion. After the data collection, Conversation Analysis (CA) was chosen to be the transcription method because it shows turn-taking practices as well as other features and characteristics that could be found in natural conversation, such as intonation, pitch, pauses, etc., used by the participants more clearly and systematically. Also, the author looked into the data without any prior hypothesis (Wong & Waring, 2021). Therefore, by examining the data from the CA angle, the question for this study emerged: Does group discussion in speaking assessment resemble a natural conversation?

Findings

Out of the two recorded group discussions, this study only focuses on one of them because the most salient findings are almost all in that discussion. It was found that the group discussions regarding the next speaker selection, irrelevant and untruthful responses, and abrupt topic changes were not natural. Excerpts from the transcription data will be provided to explain the findings:

Next Speaker Selection

EXCERPT 1

Line	Speaker			Talk
014	Fai	:		hel:ɒ (0.2) ↑patients=and (0.2) relieve the ↑stress of the ↑doctors.
015		:	→	So: ((looks at Yat and opens his both hands facing upwards))
016		:		What's your idea?=
017	Yat	:	→	=I agree with you ↑definitely the ah: im-improvement in
018		:		technology ca:n help us with the convenience

In Excerpt 1, Fai was the very first student who started the discussion and expressed his opinion about the things that will change life in the future. Then, after his speech, in line 015 he looked at Yat, who was sitting in front of him. He also opened his both hands facing upwards with an utterance "What's your idea?". He used his gaze and hand gesture to select Yat as the next speaker. Yat also noticed that it was his turn, so after Fai asked the question, he immediately answered Fai's question and took the floor. It was surprising to see that the other participant – Leung did not say anything to select himself as the next speaker as Fai's question was supposed to be addressed to both Yat and Leung because both could express their opinion freely, but it seems that there was an unspoken fixed order of turn within the three participants.

No matter if is it is in group discussions or actual social encounters, replying honestly, relevantly, and cooperatively is crucial, as Goffman (1981) pointed out in his "system requirements," "norms obliging respondents to reply honestly with whatever they know that is relevant and no more" (p.15). It can also relate to Grice's (1975) "cooperative principle" that in most social encounters, participants must make their contributions truthfully and relevantly. We expect everyone in the conversation to be honest and relevant with connectedness to other participants in the conversation. In the group discussion of this study, there were turns that participants took the floor by using phrases that is equivalent to "I agree with you" but after that, they changed the topic without any further response to the previous speaker's opinion or even their disagreement. The following Excerpt 3 show the lack of relevance and truthfulness in their discussion:

Irrelevant and Untruthful Responses

EXCERPT 2

Line	Speaker			Talk
027	Yat	:		we: enjoy these feelings and become mor:e ɒs(0.2) ↑over rely on
028		:		technology.
029	Leung	:	→	Yeah. I totally agree with what you say. Apar->>apart from the<<
030		:	→	= I think er-I I want to talk up ah talk more about the ↑cons.

In Excerpt 2, line 029 was the first time Leung got the chance to express his idea. Yat talked about his concern towards the future that because of the improvement in technology, people can buy things through online platforms. He thought that people would become lazy if they were over-reliant on technology. Then, Leung took the floor by agreeing with Yat. In line 029, he said "Yeah. I totally agree with what you say." However, after that, he suddenly said in line 030 "I want to talk more about the cons." Although he expressed his agreement, he did not give any explanation as to why he agreed or further elaboration on Yat's opinion. The sudden change of topic was not a cooperative contribution to the conversation, which made it irrelevant.

It is common to see that participants use "I agree with you" to take the floor but did not agree with others or did not intend to respond to the previous speaker. On the surface, it is not a truthful or relevant act. When we look at it from the perspective of "speech act," their utterances were similar to illocutionary acts (Austin, 1962) which means the speakers' intention of saying a particular thing. Here, "I agree with you" does not mean agreeing but is an act only to give a mere response saying that "I'm listening."

In the discussion data, a clear shift from one topic to another was noticed. The abrupt topic change can be seen below excerpt:

Abrupt topic change

EXCERPT 3

Line	Speaker			Talk
056	Yat	:	→	Ah: let's move to talking about so:me another problems in the
057		:		future that-may occur. I thin:k the ↑aging problem will (.) be th:e
058		:		↑most important?

EXCERPT 4

Line	Speaker			Talk
107	Leung	:		And that's what we are >>doing right now?<< Protecting the
108		:	→	>>environment?<< So: now we will move on?=
109	Fai	:		=Yes sure.
110	Leung	:	→	Ah: so: ah: about (0.2) so what technology? science and business
111				trend or global ↑issues will we: see in next thirty to fifty years?
112				times? SO as a >>as mentioned be↑fore<< s↑pace travel is really
113				a big ↑trend=big business trend or technology trend.

The above excerpts show that the participants took the initiative to change the topic from time to time. Galaczi (2014) pointed out that "such disjunctive topic shifts, where the topic change involves the introduction of markedly different propositions to what was discussed in the prior turn, are infrequent in every-day conversations. Instead, conversationalists tend to relate each turn topically to the prior one as they link new propositions to previous ones in a 'stepwise' fashion". (p.562) In the speaking assessment, although students were suggested several discussion questions to discuss, they did not need to answer all the questions. They could discuss things other than those questions. However, we could see from the data that, students in this group tried to discuss all suggested questions within the time limit. They did not value the importance of interaction between participants but valued the importance of being able to finish all questions together. That also explains why they always move on with their idea without responding to the previous speaker. The data shows the unnatural features of the discussion oral assessment compared to real-life conversation. Though the discussion aimed at assessing students' discussion and interactional competence, students did not present interactional competence well.

Discussion

Even though the discussion task was designed to assess language learners' interactional competence, the findings of the collected data show an unnatural conversation, which may be seen particularly in group discussions for oral assessment. When we look at the data, test-takers took turns speaking and passing the floor to the next speaker systematically. Their aims were to answer all discussion questions and to demonstrate their ability to respond to others. This study shows that in the test environment, test-takers may not be able to interact with other participants naturally, which makes it difficult to assess their real-life interactional competence. This study has its limitations because only one discussion was examined. Further study should be conducted on whether the same pattern is found in test-takers at different proficiency.

Besides, the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) may be the reason why the participants of this study performed like that. This exam was conducted upon the completion of six years of secondary education. In the speaking session of the English subject, students are required to do a group interaction and an

individual response. Students are being assessed for their ability "to express ideas with elaboration, conveying meaning using a range of vocabulary and language patterns appropriate to the context, purpose, and audience." (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2021, December). Students are always trained to use formulaic expressions to open or close a discussion, make suggestions, and change a topic. Therefore, in the present study, first-year undergraduate students may still be using the discussion skills and follow the experience they learned in secondary school. They tend to speak in a fixed turn order and use formulaic expressions to agree with or respond to others.

Regarding teaching pedagogy, instead of focusing on the practice drilling for public examination, more authentic speaking opportunities should be provided in lessons. Students should be taught to use English in real life with meaning-focused output. Examination should not be the only focus of English lessons.

Conclusion

Canale and Swain (1980) proposed that apart from linguistic competence, learners also need to manage pragmatic, discourse, and strategic competence to be proficient in a language. Therefore, interactional competence is very important for language learners. The present study provides teachers and test designers insights on how to design an appropriate, useful test to assess their English ability and the pedagogy implication on teaching interactional competence. By examining the data of a mid-term group discussion oral assessment of first-year university undergraduate students in Hong Kong, this brought insights into the authenticity of oral assessment. Speaking assessment is necessary to have inference on the language ability language learners have in daily conversation; however, depending on the test formats and test designs, it may not reveal test takers' true interactional skill as the conversation in the oral assessment is not authentic. What teachers and test designers can do is try their best to develop a test that could be related to real-life language use and provide more authentic teaching materials in a language class to familiarize students with authentic conversations, but not to focus on exam drills or formulaic expressions. This study may have limitations as it is only the data of one discussion group, which may not be enough to examine students at different proficiency levels and different group discussion assessments. In addition, more studies could be done to examine the students' differences in discussion performance before introducing authentic materials and after to see if the implementation of a more communicative teaching approach can actually help students strengthen their interactional competence. On the other hand, learners' proficiency is also one of the factors affecting their use of interactional competence in oral assessment. Therefore, it would be great if more studies could be done to compare the natural conversation with group discussion oral assessment of high and low-proficiency learners to see if the group discussion of high-proficiency learners resembles a more natural conversation.

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Proceeding Paper

Classroom Dynamics of Corrective Feedback

June Ha Kim

Abstract: As English teachers in an EFL environment, corrective feedback is a necessity and an inevitability. One of the roles of the teacher is to provide corrective feedback for their students to ensure those errors are repaired. However, corrective feedback delivery is very dynamic with many variables. The method of delivery and the provider of feedback can significantly impact language acquisition. For example, some teachers may prefer a few particular methods of corrective feedback; Consequently, those methods may not be effective in different learning environments or different situations. Furthermore, teachers may feel they are the primary facilitators of corrective feedback, when, in fact, the most effective feedback might come from the students' peers. This paper focuses on a study analyzing various types of corrective feedback used in a Japanese junior high school English class, including the results of the study, the effectiveness of the corrective feedback used and their implications.

EFL 環境における英語教師にとって、訂正フィードバックは必要不可欠かつ不可避なものである。教師の役割の一つは、生徒の誤りを訂正するためにフィードバックを提供することである。しかし、訂正フィードバックの示し方には多くの要因が関わっており、その方法や提供者によって言語習得に大きな影響を与える。例えば、ある教師は特定のフィードバック方法を好むかもしれないが、異なる学習環境や状況ではその方法が効果を発揮しない可能性もある。さらに、教師が訂正フィードバックの促進者は自分たちであると感じていても、実際に最も効果的なフィードバックは生徒同士によるものであるとも言われている。本稿では、日本の中学校英語の授業で使用された様々な訂正フィードバックの分析に焦点を当て、その結果やフィードバックの有効性、そしてそれらが示す意義について議論する。

June Ha Kim is currently in graduate school at Akita International University, enrolled in the English Learning Teaching Practices program. He was previously an Assistant Learning Teacher in northern Japan for five years and has a Bachelor' of Arts in English from the University of Illinois, Chicago.

Introduction

Corrective Feedback is an important part of language teaching and acquisition. The method of how teachers should handle Corrective Feedback (CF) is studied constantly as it has so many variables as well as emerging methods to examine the efficacy of how CF is implemented in L2 language teaching. It's been stated that it's important for teachers and students to perceive error feedback in the bigger picture, building up students' knowledge base as opposed to giving them a list of things to fix (Ferris, 2002). Likewise, employing the use of implicit CF can help students "notice the gap" in their interlanguage. However, CF isn't the only factor that can make this happen, as other factors (internal and external) also can contribute to how a student can notice the error (Heift, 2010).

While teachers traditionally provide CF to a student, it may not always be the most effective way to ensure the student has implicitly learned from it. Students have their own learning journey and, when given group tasks, can also help their classmates who might be struggling and can assist the teacher with scaffolding techniques. Students who are proficient in the L2 language can provide each other with more effective CF that can help bring the struggling students closer to reaching the target norm.

Conversation Analysis was used to observe an English language class in a Japanese middle school to understand how corrective feedback is used in the classroom, who uses it and how it is used. The strategy of how different teachers and students use CF to repair a breakdown is also observed, as well as the student response and uptake, if any, was observed. How group dynamics affect the type of feedback given in order to help a lower-level student achieve learning the target language was also observed.

Literature Review

Corrective Feedback methods have been extensively studied, yet consensus regarding the most effective approaches remains elusive. Recasts, for instance, have generated debates in the literature. While Taomae (2011) highlights potential limitations of recasts, specifically when students lack sufficient linguistic knowledge to identify them, Uddin's (2022) research counters this argument, asserting the strategic effectiveness of recasts, leading to substantial learner uptake, even surpassing other implicit CF methods. However, despite students expressing a desire for frequent corrective feedback (Zhang, 2014), teachers sometimes tend to overuse recasts, reinforcing the challenge of predicting students' responses to CF.

This unpredictability underscores the advantage of fostering opportunities for peer feedback. Sato (2013) notes the potential benefits of peer-to-peer CF, which can significantly alleviate learners' anxiety, thus advocating for teachers to encourage student-driven corrective feedback initiatives. Chen, Liu, and Lin's study (2023) reinforces this notion, indicating that peer feedback within a familiar group setting can surpass the efficacy of teacher-provided CF, enabling collaborative scaffolding among students of varying proficiency levels.

Furthermore, the multifaceted role of group dynamics in providing corrective feedback becomes evident in aiding learner uptake and mitigating affective filters (Tang & Liu, 2018). This collaborative environment not only encourages higher proficiency students to support their peers but also enables negotiation of meaning (Lynch, 1996), fostering comprehensible output crucial for language acquisition. This study also acknowledges six traditional forms of CF and introduces a potential "seventh form" termed "multiple feedback" (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). These methods aim to prompt learners to notice errors implicitly, with varying degrees of efficacy in eliciting uptake. While implicit feedback is often favored to prompt students to "notice the gap," instances of effective explicit feedback leading to student-repair and uptake have been documented (Safari, 2013; Esmaeili & Behnam, 2014). The observation in this study underlines the complexity of CF dynamics, specifically in a group-work activity.

Methods

The study was conducted at a Junior High School located in a rural city in northern Japan. The research focused on a 3rd-grade English language class comprising 16 Japanese students, supervised by one Japanese Teacher of English (JTE, or T1 for the purposes of this study) and one Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). The JTE possessed over two decades of experience teaching English, while the ALT had five years of prior experience at

the school. The JTE also employs a "Teaching English in English" instruction model, even if the students' English level is low. The students' proficiency levels ranged from Junior High School 1st level to Senior High School 1st grade level, presenting a diverse spectrum of language abilities within the classroom.

Data collection involved video and audio recordings of the lessons. Permission to record the class was obtained through a consent form signed by the student's parents due to the student's age. All parents provided signed consent prior to the recording of the class. It is important to note that following the completion of the study, all recorded data was securely destroyed to maintain confidentiality and ensure compliance with ethical standards and privacy regulations.

The recording devices were strategically placed to capture both audio and visual aspects of the classroom interactions. Recordings encompassed the entire duration of the English language lessons.

Findings and Results

The students were organized into groups of 3 or 4 and tasked with discussing their most cherished memory at the school from August to October. This activity aimed at fostering communication skills with the ALT instructor (T2), encouraging students to utilize their English language abilities without specific focus on particular linguistic forms. Each student was expected to articulate at least three sentences: describing their favorite memory, an accompanying adjective depicting the event or activity, and their emotional response to it.

Throughout this activity, the data captured several interactions within a specific group comprising two students possessing a higher cognitive grasp of English grammar (S1 and S2) and one student with limited proficiency in English (S3). These group settings were purposefully arranged to facilitate scaffolded learning, allowing peers to support and offer feedback to students with lower proficiency. The ensuing discussion specifically relates to an instance where T2 prompted S3 to share their most cherished memory. The tables below represent interactions between the T2 and one of the groups of students and capture moments where errors and attempts at CF occurred.

Table 1

	086	S3	°er° (.5) er school festival. Is. (1.0) Hn? (.5) best. memory.
	087	T2	Hn? Whose? who- whose best memory.
	088	S3	Whose best memory?
	089	T2	[Nono]

S3 jumped straight to the answer rather than providing the complete answer. T2 then attempted to use a clarification request, asking "whose best memory? However, the student did not recognize the CF and the repair failed.

Table 2

	090	S2	[Hhh]
	091	S3	Eh?
→	092	S1	*Dareno? Dareno?*
	093	S3	Ah I, I, best memory.
	094	T2	hm
→	095	S3	>My<
	096	T2	Good.
	097	S3	My best memory.
	098	T2	OK?

S2 signals that S3 misunderstood T2's CF and S3 became aware of his error. S1 gives him explicit feedback in Japanese asking Dareno? Dareno? (whose?), translating the T2's CF. S3 realizes his error and is able to make a repair attempt, but it is not sufficient. At line 94, the T2 signals that there is still an error, using a clarification request with the utterance hm, in which S3 was able to respond with the correction, my. The S3 is then able to complete the repair sequence, without any prompting from the T2, demonstrating an immediate uptake from S3.

Table 3

	099	S3	Eh:. Japanese? Ah
			((looks to R)) Ja- Japan. ↑Japan. Japanese? °Japanese? °
	100	S2	hhh
	101	S3	°Japanese? °
	102	T2	Mm Japanese:
	103	S3	Japan old meko- old drama.
	104	T2	Ah:: °ok° (1.0)

In this next sequence, S3 struggles with explaining the event they want to discuss. They focus on the predicate before the subject, which the T2 uses repetition to elicit the rest of the utterance. However, the error persists as the T2 is unable to ascertain what the entire sentence is, and instead of providing a CF, they allow the sequence to continue.

Table 4

	105	S3	>It is<
→	106	T2	It. Is?
	107	S3	It is-
→	108	T2	It is? Is? Is?
			Is is (.5) present. (.5) *genzai.* (2.0)
	109	S3	Mm mm
→	110	T2	*Genzai.*i-i-is:: *kako.*
	111	S3	*Kako.*
	112	S2	Hhh is *no kakowa?*
	113	S1	Wa-
	114	S2	Is *no kakowa?* (2.0) Wa-
→	115	S3	Wa. Was.
	116	T2	Mm good. It was? (3.0)
	117	S1	°*Korewa mou ikkai.* Old°
	118	S3	It was. (1.0) Ja- Japanese?
	119	S1	Mm hm
	120	S3	Japan old drama.
	121	T2	Ja- Japan? [Ja-
	122	S3	[Japanese?]
	123	T2	Mm [good
	124	S3	[Japanese? Old drama.
	125	T2	Mm ok good?

At line 106, T2 identified an error in S3's expression, initially utilizing a clarification request. However, this interaction was disrupted by the main teacher's intervention, which addressed the entire class. The CF was reiterated at line 108, initially delivered in English as metalinguistic feedback. As both S1 and S2 did not comprehend the English feedback, T2 switched to Japanese for clearer communication. Attempting to elicit the past tense of "is," T2 provided metalinguistic feedback, but S3 remained uncertain about the appropriate response. Recognizing the breakdown, S2 provided support for the CF by asking S3, in Japanese, for the past tense form of "is." Subsequently, S1 offered partial explicit feedback, and S2 reiterated her guidance, employing explicit feedback or possibly elicitation (represented by the utterance "*wa*" to inquire about the past tense form of "is"). S3 grasped the error and initiated a repair at line 115. This multifaceted repair process spanned five turns before a successful repair was achieved.

T2 reiterated the prompt, allowing S3 to complete their response. However, a misunderstanding arose at line 120 when S3 misinterpreted S1's response from line 119, altering the Japanese form from its correct state to an incorrect one ("Japan"). T2 signaled a CF with repetition, querying "Japan?" Before T2 could reiterate, S3 self-identified the error and executed a self-repair.

Table 5

	126	S3	(1.0) It is fun.
→	127	T2	[Eh?
	128	S2	hhh
→	129	T2	It is?
	130	S3	It is
→	131	S2	*kakode*
→	132	S3	°ah° It was [fun.
	133	T2	[good.
			((clapping))
			°very good job°

In response to the third question, S3 described their experience but inadvertently repeated a grammatical error made earlier at line 105. T2 promptly signaled an error with a clarification request. S2 also identified the mistake. Employing a clarification request (by repetition or the erroneous utterance), T2 reiterated the error, and once again, S2 provided metalinguistic feedback, assisting in the repair process. Realizing the repetition of their error, S3 autonomously initiated a self-repair. This repair process unfolded across three turns.

These instances exemplify diverse uses of corrective feedback aimed at prompting the student to notice their errors. However, mere recognition of an error does not always guarantee an understanding of how to rectify it. This sequence underscores how students supported the teacher's scaffolding efforts. Despite the higher English proficiency of S3's group members, they also encountered sequences requiring repairs. It is essential to note that the intent is not to embarrass other students; rather, it can be perceived by S3 as a shared experience where mistakes are acceptable. Proper implementation of Explicit Positive Assessment (EPA) can contribute to reducing both the students' and other group members' affective filters.

Table 6

	219	S1	Was ( ) $I'm happy.$
	220	T2	Mm:
	221	S1	I was happy.
	222	T2	YES ok go:od

In this sequence, S1, despite being given the framework that the next utterance should be given in the past tense, still provided the present tense in the same sequence. T2 signaled that there was an error, however S1 could self-repair. We can see with the next sequence that the error was not noticed by S3, despite making the same tense agreement error previously.

Table 7

→	243	S3	It's fat.
	244	S2	[Hhh
	245	T2	[One more one more
	246	S3	[hard hard hard
	247	T2	>It's hard< ok (2.0) one more time. It?
→	248	S3	It's hard.
→	249	T2	It's?
	250	S3	It is-
	251	T2	((hand flipping motion))
→	252	S3	It was
	253	T2	Go:od ok.

S1 prompted S3 to articulate their second response to the same question. Despite S2's non-derisive laughter signaling an incorrect word usage (and a repetition of the same error), T2 intervened with a clarification request, prompting S3 to initiate a repair. Subsequently, T2 requested S3 to restate the sentence without contractions. However, S3 repeated the same tense agreement error observed in line 105, "it is". T2 utilized a physical gesture to highlight the incorrect tense usage, prompting S3 to immediately rectify the error without further instruction. This repair process unfolded across two turns from the instance at line 250.

This scenario showcases S3's ability to identify and rectify a tense agreement error when prompted despite the inability to self-repair. More notably, it illustrates a reduction of CF- related turns in subsequent instances, suggesting that the constructive feedback from peers aided the teacher in delivering more effective CF.

Discussion

While recast was not employed for this study, it still demonstrated that teachers must be ready to be able to use various forms of CF. Many variables could have played a role in why T2's initial attempts at CF were unsuccessful, including lack of experience, inability to provide the correct feedback for the situation, or S3's affective filter being too high without T2's knowledge. However, it does not underscore the necessity for teachers to be able to be skilled in using multiple forms of feedback, to understand how to navigate around student's lack of proficiency or their affective filter.

A significant point of saliency came from the group members' ability to use CF without the teacher's prompting and were also able to use different forms of CF, resulting in repairs that the T2 was unable to accomplish on their own. It can be inferred that classmates can play a pivotal role in EFL learning. It was also demonstrated during these student-led turns, that even explicit feedback can be effective for the student to eventually be able to produce the correct utterance, even though they still needed minimal prompting to be able to produce it.

Another point of saliency can be found in the number of turns taken in the attempts to have S3 be able to self-repair. Even though the teacher was present, the group was able to take the greatest number of turns, and with each marked error, the number of turns to get the student to self-repair decreased. This is supported by the idea that learners interact more with other speakers, thus increasing their output in a group setting. The responsibility for the negotiation of meaning falls on their peers, and the learners are enabled to do the language work, and thus can place the target language into proper contexts for their peers (Gibbons, 2002). Not only can the teacher move to a different task with the

students helping each other with the learning, but it also helps the students become aware of common errors their classmates may make and if they are making the same errors.

Conclusion

The provision of corrective feedback (CF) remains influenced by multifaceted factors, encompassing the provider's characteristics, the recipient's proficiency level, and even contextual constraints such as time limitations. Teachers bear the responsibility of methodically approaching CF execution, considering both its efficacy in facilitating error learning and its capacity to prompt student self-repair while managing time efficiently.

Beyond diverse CF methodologies, educators must address additional impediments to student learning, including anxiety and inadequate contextualized output, remediable through peer interactions within group settings. Collaborative endeavors prove instrumental in scaffolding lower proficiency students toward their optimal learning levels (i+1), concurrently mitigating their affective filters.

This study illuminates the multifaceted effectiveness of corrective feedback, highlighting its efficacy not solely reliant on teacher provision but also bolstered by peer involvement. It emphasizes the pivotal role of conducive environments and student rapport in fostering a safe space for error-making, which is crucial for enhancing language proficiency.

In the realm of L2 instruction, educators should seek to be able to discern appropriate responses to student errors and curate environments fostering a culture wherein students feel secure to make mistakes, thereby fortifying their path toward improved proficiency.

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Proceeding Paper

Effects and Challenges of Establishing a Graded Reader Program at a Junior High School

Christopher J. Mack, Aquanna Ishii

Abstract: Readjusting a Japanese English classroom to accomplish a wide array of goals and objectives can be a daunting task (Sakui, 2007; Umeda, 2014). In the case of trying to successfully establish an extensive reading component to a curriculum in an EFL learning context, some problems can be planned for, and some are unforeseen. These problems might include a disrupted schedule with missed classes, obstacles regarding grammar knowledge, and a divide in opinion within the department concerning implementation. Teachers, therefore, must adopt and adapt a flexible mindset in order to handle and navigate through bureaucratic policies and procedures. This paper aspires to help other teachers by sharing the researcher's experiences and provide insight and support for teaching aspiring to begin their own reading program. Change is difficult and chaotic, but if it improves our student's academic careers, then the benefits will outweigh the costs.

日本の英語教育の様々な目標や目的を達成するのは大変な事である（佐久井，2007；梅田，2014）。EFL 学習環境において、カリキュラムに多読の要素をうまく組み込もうとする際、予測できる問題もあれば、できない問題もある。それらの問題には、欠席による授業スケージュールのばらつき、文法のつまずき、英語教員間の意見の分裂などが含まれる。従って、教師は状況に応じて柔軟な考え方を採用し、適応しなければならない。本稿は、研究者自身の経験を共有することを通して、独自の多読プログラムを始めたいと考える教師に、その手がかりとサポートを提供することを目的とする。変化は困難で混沌としているが、もしそれが生徒の学業実績向上に繋がり、実際の困難よりメリットが上回るのであれば、その変化は必要なものである。

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Implementing an Extensive Reading Program

There is no denying the benefits learners receive from the incorporation of an extensive reading (ER) component in a language learning context (Beglar & Hunt, 2014; Nakanishi, 2015; Nation & Waring, 2020; Nishizawa et al., 2010; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007; Yamashita, 2008). ER allows learners to develop their vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2022), background knowledge (Grabe & Stoller, 2020), reading fluency (Beglar et al., 2012; Beglar & Hunt, 2014), reading ability (Sparks et al., 2014), language performance skills (Nishizawa et al., 2010) cognitive skills (Jeon & Yamashita, 2014) and so on. With the countless benefits that come from ER (Nakanishi, 2015) every English teaching institution and instructor should encourage ER and yet it is still rarely seen as a part of the language learning curriculum (MEXT : Online Contents for ALTs, n.d.). There seems to be an

incongruence between the positive benefits that instructors believe are available for the learners from ER and the actual use and incorporation in their teaching contexts (Macalister, 2010; Mu & Green, 2012; Renandya & Jacobs, 2002). A variety of issues and challenges tend to come hand in hand with the implementation of ER in the English learning context. Below, we will introduce some of the challenges that teachers could face when starting a new ER program in their schools with graded readers. Some issues are common challenges, and others might be context-dependent. We are establishing some of these challenges and issues through a similar experience of constructing and carrying out an ER program in a Japanese Junior High School. Learners participated in 12 weeks of ER and showed positive progress in vocabulary acquisition. We hope that these insights will help current and future teachers establish their own ER programs in their respective teaching institutions and contexts.

Challenges Before the Implementation of Extensive Reading

Implementing a graded reader program at a Japanese junior high school always comes with possible issues and unknown obstacles behind every corner. Some of these obstacles might include, unseen costs, a separated English department, lacking awareness of student's English levels, and an inconsistent class schedule due to school closures. One might say that every day can be a new adventure of discovery for teachers and students. However, there are a few things to consider during the planning stages of the course. In our study, one of the things we tried to plan for was class time. It was decided by the Japanese teachers and the Native English Teacher (NET) to use class time instead of student's free time to conduct a graded reader program. This was to monitor the students during their reading progression to ensure they were truly reading. This had consequences as the yearly school schedule was already set, and there was very little room to reschedule classes if an emergency such as school closure due to typhoons, train stoppages, or influenza or COVID outbreaks were to occur.

Another aspect to consider in implementing extensive reading within the lesson was cancelling reading classes so that students had more time to cover material that would be covered on their test (Watanabe, 2004). Regarding this study, both class cancellations did occur, but students were still able to complete the reading of their books for each week of the course.

Another factor that needed consideration was the graded readers. For a graded reader program, there are three types of programs: physical books, online libraries or reading websites, or a hybrid of physical and digital reading. For our study we used physical books only as the school had already purchased a large selection of books and stored them in their library. Unfortunately, due to the teacher's lack of understanding of how extensive reading is done through graded readers, these books were unused and nothing more than decorative school pieces to show future students and their parents that English was available at the school. If students did read these books of their own volition, it was because they possessed a high level of L2 fluency and could read these books with little to no interference regarding vocabulary (Beglar & Hunt, 2014; Nation, 2022)

Online reading subscriptions require monthly expenses that many school administrators might not want to use or they might defer the payment to the parents. This was one of the issues that divided the English department teachers. Some of the older teachers felt that is was more of a burden to ask parents of the students to pay an extra fee for an online reading library so that the students can read on their own in their free time. Therefore, it was decided that for the implementation of ER for this study, the students would read books already purchased by the school, stored in the library, and read during class time. If a teacher does not have access or funds for physical books then an online,

subscription based alternative may have to be explored. It just requires the teacher doing more research or planning in setting up the online technology that will allow the students to read using a digital platform.

Challenges from within the Course

One problem, that we touched upon previously, was the use of physical books. During our program, we found that the students had run out of books to read during the course. What is meant by this is that we had not anticipated that many students would be reading at the same level. The students were asked to read six books from each level before moving to the next level of the graded readers. Despite having two to three copies of one book within the reading level, students might not have had enough books to read if they read a few books and the unread books were being read by other students. In order to handle this problem, the teachers encouraged the students to try to read one book from the next level or tried to have students share books during the class.

A second problem that was not anticipated was the lack of students' understanding of English grammar. As the student's English level was not checked before the students entered the school, the teachers were not prepared to handle grammar questions about the reading that might have been able to be addressed in their grammar classes or explicitly taught by the Japanese teacher during the reading classes. According to Japanese English teachers, the students are aware of the present tense conjugation of English verbs before entering junior high school. The teachers were aware that during the student`s final years in elementary they were exposed to English verb conjugation in present tense. The graded readers, however, used past tense verb conjugation which were irregular. The students were confused by these new words and when they asked the teacher for help, the teacher found it difficult to properly support the students as they were not supposed to teach the students past tense until the end of the school year and beginning of their second grade in junior high school. The Oxford Graded Reading Tree books are written for L1 students but possess words that Japanese students are capable of learning. Since these books are written for L1 learners, the verb conjugation is mainly written in past tense, as past tense is primarily used for written English and story-telling. The verbs that are also used in the graded readers are mainly irregular verbs that do not follow easy English verb conjugation. This situation led to the students looking up these words in their dictionaries but not understanding the rules that govern past tense verb conjugation as they had not covered that topic in their grammar classes before the beginning of the reading course.

Challenges Arising from within the school

The problems originating from within the school came mainly from the teachers. The first primary challenge was the principal. Since the students in our study are under the legal age of eighteen, the principal is responsible for giving consent. The principal's main concern was that the student's personal information would be used in the paper for our study. From the principal's perspective, this point of view is understandable, as many parents or students might not want their information shared with unknown people. However, after creating a spreadsheet of the student's answers to the pre-, mid, and post-tests using genderless identification numbers to mask student identity, the principal was still reluctant to give consent and waited until the very last day of the school year to provide his permission. This situation causes an unwanted amount of stress on the researchers' part, because without his consent the findings would not be able to be published. Teachers seeking information and support for their fledgling programs would find themselves without guidance or support.

The second main area of difficulty came from fellow teachers within the school system. In this context, the teachers can be classified into two main groups: those within the English department and those outside the English department. We will first look at the perspective of a Social Studies teacher who witnessed the graded reader program taking place in the library. This teacher observed that the two English teachers were sitting at both the front and the back of the classroom with very little to do while the students read. This teacher then commented to the head of the English department that he did not like the students reading during class time because it made the teachers look like they were not teaching. This is the classic mentality of a teacher who has subscribed to a teacher-centered classroom. From his perspective the teacher is at the core of the learning experience as the teacher is the sole gatekeeper of information (Umeda, 2014).

The Japanese education system is still dominated by a teacher-centered style of education, where the teacher stands in the front of the classroom and lectures the students about the topic at hand while the students write notes or participate in a passive manner. In a student-centered class the student is the main focal point and the teacher takes on the role of a guide (Brown and Lee, 2015). The main obstacle for the English language teacher is that MEXT desires a student-centered style of learning during English communication classes, but has done very little to support Japanese English teachers in changing the roles of teacher and students. Without proper guidance and training, the teachers will fall back onto the teacher-centered styles that they have become accustomed to in their educational system (Sakui; 2007). In a graded reader program, the center of the class is the student. Reading can be seen as a passive activity, but that does not necessarily mean the teacher is irrelevant. In a student-centered classroom, the teacher serves The purpose of a supporter and guide is to help the student navigate the extremely complex world of the English language.

Two other teachers also became a cause of stress and agitation. The first teacher was a semi-retired English teacher who only worked at the high school level. He had no direct connection to the junior high school or the reading program; however, because of the sempai/kohai relationship that is prevalent within the Japanese school system, many of the younger teachers felt obligated to listen to his remarks. The sempai/kohai relationship is unique to Japanese culture. In Japan, the sempai or elder, is seen as a figure to be listened to, revered, and respected regardless of their individual flaws by the younger or kohai. his elder teacher first advised the head of the English department that NETs do not possess valid Japanese teaching credentials and should, therefore, have a minimized use and effect within the classroom. From his perspective, a "proper" English teacher needs to go through the Japanese education system to be a fully qualified teacher. From his perspective this is understandable as many NETs do not possess teaching credentials (Hiratsuka, 2022). However, some NETs possess credentials that might supersede a Japanese teaching license, such as a Master's Degree or doctorate.

The second teacher was the head of the English department herself. During the early weeks, before the school year starts, the teachers are put in charge of creating curriculums and syllabus for the school year. Many of these are simply recycled from previous years with very minor changes or adjustments. To conduct our research, we also required the head of the English department to consent to the graded reader program to which she vehemently objected to in front of other staff members. However, as the conversation became more heated and as more information was revealed the department head asked the researcher to talk privately. In this private conversation, it was revealed to the researcher that she agreed that a graded reading program would help the students, but she could not officially support the researcher. Another teacher, also revealed later to the researcher positioned at the school, that one reason why the department head was forceful in her rejection of the program proposed by the foreign teacher, was that the foreign teacher did not

possess a Japanese teachers license. A few of the teachers in the English department think that since foreign teachers do not possess Japanese teaching licenses, their ideas, and suggestions about helping to advance English education in Japan are invalid because they lack MEXT certification and accreditation (Hiratsuka, 2022; Hosoki, 2011). This has also been a criticism of MEXT's plans of putting English speakers into the English language classroom (Steele & Zhang, 2016).

According to the department head, she attempted to have the students read during the winter vacation using an online reading library, however the older teachers rejected this idea on the grounds that the online library required additional money that they did not want the parents paying for and the teachers were uncomfortable with the students reading online. At the end of the year, another Japanese teacher, during the exit interview, informed one of the researchers that the head of the English department wants to incorporate reading more into the curriculum without the support of the researcher and the data collected during this research, as it might be implied that the idea of reading originated from outside the Japanese English department.

Addressing the Challenges

One strategy to overcome these obstacles is to adopt and adapt a growth mentality for the teachers. When teachers develop a growth mentality, it helps establish that education is an exercise in discovery and possesses the ability of breaking the repetitive nature of education. This approach to education might help with teacher training and development along with decreasing teacher burnout.

Stemming from this idea is also the shifting from a teacher-centered learning environment to a more student-centered one (Brown & Lee, 2015). For many teachers, especially in Japan, this idea can be seen as a huge obstacle because of the culture they have been taught and what the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) expects them to accomplish in the classroom. Many teachers, on a yearly basis, comment about how they want to turn the classroom into a student-centered learning environment. However, many Japanese teachers reject new ideas proposed by outside observers fearing pushback from older teachers, the school administration, boards of education, or even MEXT itself (Gorsuch, 2000). Teachers might also feel that they need support or more training in order to fully transition from a teacher to a student-centered classroom (Umeda, 2014). The Japanese English class still maintain the elements of teacher-centered teaching style paired with a direct translation style to assist in objective assessment because of entrance tests for higher, advanced learning. In these instances, administrations and government bodies can provide teachers with opportunities in teaching training by allowing workshops and guest lecturers to advise teachers on new research-based approaches and strategies into their education policies rather than only incorporating traditional approaches which have fallen out of favor and do not produce high quality results (Umeda, 2014).

Discussion & Conclusion

Change is difficult. Adopting and adapting new approaches to English education is not an easy endeavor. However, there are paths to change that can and do create lasting positive effects within the educational environment. The main goal to be learned by Japanese teachers is that new research-based approaches should not be abandoned at the first sign of trouble. As the researchers learned in this study, even though there were obstacles and challenges to be overcome such as the class timetable, grammar complications, and financial issues, the student's English vocabulary knowledge of the students did increase throughout the graded reader program as supported by the research data. The data did

provide evidence that despite the challenges the graded reading program did allow the students to increase their English vocabulary knowledge as supported by the research.

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Proceeding Paper

Formation of Unofficial Leadership Roles for Native and Non-Native Speakers in Group Discussions

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Abstract: Students in an English-medium university in Japan participated in a group discussion with non-native speaking (NNS) peers and one native speaker (NS). Preconceived notions of the expert-novice dyad assume that native speakers naturally take on the role of the expert due to their linguistic competence. However, recent studies have deconstructed this assumption (Dings, 2012; Reicher & Liebscher, 2012; Vickers, 2010). Using conversation analysis, this paper analyzes the conversational turns that students use to determine their expert or novice identity. In addition, unofficial leader roles and follower roles emerged within the group. Participants who self-identify as an expert will spontaneously take on unofficial leader roles, while novices stay in a follower role. However, leadership roles do not have to fall only on the native speaker. Showing non-native speakers to take on unofficial leadership roles can be a way for them to strengthen their conversational ability.

日本で英語教育を受ける非母語話者(NNS)の大学生数名を対象に、1 名の母語話者(NS)とのグループディスカッションを実施した。英語運用力がエキスパートとビギナーレベルの話者での会話において、母語話者が自然にエキスパートの役割を担うことが推測される。しかし、近年の研究ではこの仮説が再考されている(Dings, 2012; Reicher & Liebscher, 2012; Vickers, 2010)。本稿では、話者役割の分析から、学生たちがエキスパートまたはビギナーとしてのアイデンティティを決定する方法に関して考察を深める。また、グループ内では自発的なリーダー役とフォロワー役が現れた。自らをエキスパートと認識する学生は、能動的にそのリーダー役を引き受け、ビギナーはフォロワー役に留まった。しかし、リーダー役は必ずしも母語話者だけに限定されなかった。以上から、非母語話者に対して彼らが自発的なリーダー役を担うことが可能であると示すことにより、彼ら自身が自らの会話能力を向上させる可能性が示唆された。

Introduction

In 2018, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) revised the English curriculum standards to fit into the model of active learning. One part of this active learning was the need for a communicative approach to open discussions done in group work or pair work. In a foreign language classroom, a majority of interactions between students occur between "nonnative speakers working dyads or small groups" (Leeming, 2019). However, when presented with the opportunity to participate in discussions with a native-speaker (NS) involved, the dynamics of the group will naturally differ from a homogeneous non-native speaking group. Leki (2001) states that native speakers are identified as the more capable peer based on their linguistic competence. NSs are assumed to be the expert while non-native speakers (NNS) assume the role of the novice. Those in an expert role are likely to be seen as the leader of the group, whereas novice roles are likely to be seen as a follower. However, the assumption that the NS should assume the role of the expert and therefore become the leader of the group can limit the potential that the NNS can bring to the discussion. Regardless of linguistic competence, both NS and NNS can take on what Dornyei and Murphey (2003) describe as "unofficial

leadership roles" which emerge spontaneously without explicit assignment from an instructor (p. 112). By looking at the unofficial roles taken up by university students in a group discussion, this paper further adds to the body of research on the deconstruction of the expert-novice dyad through the lens of NS/NNS dynamics and leadership.

Literature Review

Co-Construction of Expert/Novice Identity

Drawing on the notion of Vygotsky's (1978) conceptualization of the zone of proximal development, participants in a group setting can learn "in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Historically, research on NS and NNS interactions have taken a limiting view; with NSs perceived to play the role of the more capable peer (Vygotsky, 1978) because they are the "expert language knowers whose primary responsibility is to provide linguistic support" for their NNS counterparts (Hall et al., 2004, p. 64). On the other hand, NNSs have been viewed to only play the role of the novice language learner who can only "take up and act on the linguistic aid provided by their more expert peers" (p. 64). In other words, NS has assumed the identity of the expert and NNS can only take on the identity of a novice. However, Jacoby and Ochs (1995) argued that identity is co-constructed through interaction, meaning that one does not have a set identity from the beginning. Furthermore, "the construction of expert-novice in dynamic interaction is a much more complicated, shifting, moment-by-moment reconstruction" (Jacoby and Gonzales, 1991, p.149). During interactions, turn-taking organizations become the basis of how identity is constructed. Each turn that participants take leads to a clearer definition of their own identity, as well as how they are orienting towards the identity of other participants. With every turn in conversation, participants have a chance to negotiate their identities. While being a NS or NNS is an identity that cannot be changed, the preconceived notion of NS being the expert and NNS being the novice can shift. These shifts can lead participants to taking on either unofficial leadership roles or follower roles (Dornyei and Murphey, 2003). A growing body of research shows the deconstruction of the dichotomy of NS-NNS assumed expert/novice identity.

While NSs do have more linguistic competence, NNSs may be the experts in subject matter (Alhodithi, 2015). Vickers (2010) conducted a study looking at the relationship between two students (a NS hardware engineer and a NNS software engineer) in an expert/novice dyad in the Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) department. The findings indicated that the NNS had more knowledge in computer engineering than the NS. In a longitudinal study by Dings (2012), two Spanish speakers, one NS and one NNS, had their conversations recorded over the span of one semester. After the data was analyzed using conversation analysis methodology, it was concluded that towards the end of the year, repairs were more focused on "co-constructing meaning, not structure" indicating that both participants were "slowly distancing themselves from the initial novice/expert orientation" (p. 1516). Hall et al. (2004) studied a freshman seminar composed of 17 students of varying linguistic competencies, with both NSs and NNSs present. Regardless of their NS/NNS identities, the students saw each other as "collaborative partners," (p. 70) willing to work together and develop social bonds. Hall et al. (2004) emphasized that if power differences are assumed between NS and NNS before they are able to "create social ties [and] cultivate collaboration," they may miss the ways "in which both groups work together to create partnerships that are not dependent on their language status" (p. 84). These studies show that expert/novice identities do not necessarily have to be dependent on linguistic competence and may even have harmful effects that limit growth in developing conversational competence.

Student Leader Roles

Group dynamics emerge when different members are assigned different roles (Soh, 2000). One of the key roles in a group is the leader. In an education setting, Dornyei and Murphey (2003) identifies two types of student leaders, official leaders and unofficial leaders. Official leaders are appointed by an authority figure, usually a teacher but may also be other students. The other type of student leader emerges spontaneously and takes on unofficial leadership roles. Unofficial leaders can be further broken down into task specialists and socio-emotional specialists. The emergence of these two types of leaders serve to accomplish the goal at hand and "maintain cohesiveness" (p. 113). Group leaders, whether they are officially appointed or spontaneously emerge usually benefit the group as a whole since all participants are working towards the same goal.

Dornyei and Murphey (2003) further breaks down task roles and socio-emotional roles into more concretely defined roles. This paper will only focus on a portion of task roles such as the initiator/contributor, information seeker/provider, opinion seeker/giver, clarifier, and coordinator. In contrast to leader roles, students can also take on a follower role. Followers are known as a "low-profile constructive role" (Dornyei & Murphey, 2003) contributing only when prompted by leaders.

Expert/Novice Identity in Group Roles

There is growing evidence of the deconstruction of the expert-novice dyad (Alhodithi, 2015; Vickers, 2010; Dings 2012) in combination with Dornyei and Murphey's (2003) student leadership roles, which indicate that experts are not obligated to take on leadership roles while novices are left to take up follower positions. Reichert and Liebscher (2012) show that expert-novice identities can exist even between NNS-NNSs. NNSs can still learn a great deal from each other without needing to have the linguistic competence of a NS. NNS can be expertise in areas such as "use of artifacts,…multilingual knowledge, interactional abilities,... task management expertise and facilitate behaviors" (p. 607). Therefore, NNSs have the potential to take on unofficial leadership roles depending on how they construct their identity throughout an interaction. While Dornyei and Murphey (2003) looked extensively at the dynamics between group members in a ESL/EFL language classroom, they did not mention what could happen when NNS and NS combine within one group. This paper aims to look at the various ways in which both NS and NNS take on unofficial leadership and follower roles in an EFL group discussion.

Method

Context and Participants

This study was conducted in an English-medium university in Japan. A speaking and listening course was selected within the university's English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program. The purpose of the EAP program is to prepare students for subject-matter courses taught in English and a mandatory one year study-abroad requirement for graduation. The students that were observed for this study were in their final year of EAP, meaning that they would move on to subject-matter courses after this semester. The class was in its 8th week, meeting twice a week for 110-minute sessions.

One group of four students were observed for the study. Groups were formed at random by the professor. The members consisted of one male native English speaker (John) and three female non-native speakers (Ema, Aya, Yui) whose L1s were all Japanese. The main activities of the class was to warm-up with a mini-debate prior to moving on to the main discussion on a news article. The news article centered around the controversy

surrounding Hiroyuki Nishimura, the creator of the anonymous online forum 4chan. The news article and questions for discussion were given to students prior to this class, allowing them to prepare talking points. Students were allowed to use their personal laptop computers in class.

Data Collection

Both audio and video data were recorded using a Zoom Handy Video Recorder. Approximately 50 minutes of recorded data was transcribed. The data was analyzed using a conversation analysis (CA) approach. CA is a method of analysis that approaches data from an emic perspective, in other words "a way of looking at language and social interaction from an 'insider's' perspective" (Wong & Waring, 2021, p.6). The data is firstly approached by "unmotivated looking" which "involves initially examining the data without a set of hypotheses" (Wong & Waring, 2021, p. 6). Instead, salience is found within the data through looking at prominent moments that "[stick] out…in some meaningful way" (Hale et al., 2018). Analyzing the data led the author to discover the ways in which both NS and NNS adopt a variety of unofficial leadership roles in order to complete the task.

Findings

Establishment of NS and NNS in Unofficial Leader Roles

Excerpt 1

Line		Speaker	Talk
	82	John	I think? Uh:: so that's [definitely something (.) worth looking into.
	83	Aya	[wait]
	84		Wait,
	85	John	°Hm?°
→	86	Aya	Are we going to start now? ((looks at Yui))
	87	Ema	Ah no [no]
	88	John	[Oh] are we just like taking- >>I-I- don't know this cla[ss]
	89	Yui	[No]
	90	Aya	[Okay]
	91		[°( )° cause I thought we like taking notes beforeh[and?<<
	92	Ema,Yui	[hh]
	93	Aya	[Okay]
	94	John	>>Cause I wanna throw that out there.<< Like, I don't know the exact.

	95		layout of these discussions. [°>>or do you wanna come up with<<°]
	96	Aya	=°Ok.° [I think we're time to like (0.5)
	97	Ema	[So::]
→	98	Ema	[To prepare[::
→	99	Aya	[Yeah.]
→	100	Yui	=Prepare.

Excerpt 1 happens at the beginning of the first activity conducted in class. The teacher provides the group with a debate topic about whether or not homework should be abolished in schools. After deciding which pair will take the affirmative side (John and Ema), John immediately claims his excerpt role as the NS and starts to elaborate on his opinion. This speech act (Hymes, 1986) can be seen as a way for John to identify as an information provider but he is interrupted by Aya in line 83. Aya's notion towards Yui in line 86 was less of a question, but rather a calling for confirmation that this was not the correct procedure. Ema, and later Yui, take notice of Aya's confusion and intervene. The three NNSs all attempt to clarify to the NS the usual procedure, which is to have some time to discuss their argument with their partner before starting the debate. In this situation, even though John, the assumed expert, could have taken on the unofficial leader role of initiator, he was not the expert in terms of classroom procedure. In this case, John can be considered the novice for not understanding the procedure of the class. The other three NNSs become the experts, since they are aware of the procedure for the debate, and come together to take on a coordinator role in order to explain to John. Had Aya not stepped in and interrupted John, he would have disrupted the normal flow of the procedure.

Excerpt 2

	Line	Speaker	Talk
	293.	Yui	Is there loa to limit the contents of Twitter
	294.	John	Like a law?
	295.	Yui	Law? Yeah.
→	296.	John	Uh::: you mean like (.) like on the website? Or like in Japan? Or the
	297.		United States or,
→	298.	Yui	Ahh I [see
→	299.	John	[Or wh-what are you asking? Sorry.
	300.	Yui	HH [uhh
→	301.	John	[( ) Sorry, I'm trying to understand

	302.		(3.0)
→	303.	Ema	If um if some ( ) uh °for example ( ) ° happen by um by when users uh post
	304.	John	mhm
	305.	Ema	On Twitter
	306.	John	mhm
→	307.	Ema	In that case, who gonna be responsible? Is it the user?
	308.	John	>>Yes I-ah-yes<< °it would be the user yeah.°
	309.		(1.0)
→	310.	Ema	So uh even if the username is ( ) [(.) are not ano-[anonymous?
→	311.	Yui	[mhm yeah

In excerpt 2, the students begin to discuss the news article about Hiroyuki Nishimura. The discussion continues smoothly until a breakdown occurs in line 293. Yui starts to ask John about a law limiting Twitter content but she mispronounces "law" as "loa." John, unsure of Yui's meaning, initiates a repair in line 294. However, Yui thinks John is correcting her pronunciation and does not realize that he is seeking clarification in line 296. She signals comprehension with "Ahh I see" in line 298 but John's repeated clarification attempts indicate there is still a breakdown. Yui acknowledges John as the information provider in asking a question, but her misinterpretation and failure to repair the breakdown highlight her novice position. After three seconds of silence, Ema attempts to repair Yui's question, assuming the role of a clarifier. Despite multiple attempts (lines 303, 307, 310), it is unclear whether or not Ema correctly repairs Yui's initial question. Nevertheless, Ema's persistence in attempting to clarify demonstrates the beginnings of her active role as an unofficial leader.

NNS-Leader and NNS-Follower Interaction

Excerpt 3

	Line	Speaker	Talk
	355.		(12.0)
→	356.	Ema	(-->Yui) Do you think he ha:s res- um res- respect.
	357.	Yui	((shakes head))
	358.	Ema	( )
	359.	Yui	hh
→	360.	Ema	((shaking her head)) You don't think so?
	361.	Yui	$No.$
	362.		(1.0)
→	363.	Ema	Why?
	364.	Yui	Mm because (1.0) Because of his ↑behavior <<Japanese people::>> are: (came
	365.		to/can to) °mm° (.) defeat the (.) other's opinion like *romppa*. So it's: mm::
	366.		↑Sometimes it's good like, in debate or (.) mm:: (3.0) yeah=debate?

In this final excerpt, the situation of the group dynamic has shifted due to John having to leave the discussion because of a time conflict. The three NNSs are left to reconfigure their roles. However, since Ema has previously shown her leadership capabilities, she remains in her unofficial leadership role while Yui and Aya decide to remain in follower roles. Prior to this transcription, Ema had asked Yui and Aya a question and claimed her role as the next unofficial leader immediately after John left the discussion. With class time running out, Ema needs to continue the conversation to stay on task. She uses a telling question, which is used to "elicit extended responses," (Wong & Waring, 2021, p.101) to ask Yui for her opinion on whether Hiroyuki Nishimura deserves respect (line 356) but is met with a non-verbal cue. Ema persists and asks Yui twice more to elaborate on her opinion (lines 360, 363). It is not until line 364 that Yui finally gives a fuller answer.

Throughout this interaction, Ema and Yui are co-constructing their leader and follower roles. Yui's initial avoidance and minimal responses suggest that she is adhering to her follower role, not because of linguistic competence, but because she has already established herself as a follower. She has the competence to elaborate on Ema's question but only after Ema's persistent nudging. Yui may not have fully grasped the pragmatics of Ema's telling questions, expecting more in-depth responses. As for Ema, she continues her role as an unofficial leader by seeking the opinions of others. Her persistence pays off after she and Yui have a meaningful conversation until the end of class.

Discussion

Even if the identity of being a NS or NNS is immutable, the identity of being an expert or novice can be constructed in unexpected ways. The commonly generalized NS-NNS dichotomy where NS is typically seen as the expert and the NNS as the novice, may lead to false assumptions that NNSs cannot be the expert, and therefore hold a leadership role. Even if NNSs lack linguistic competence compared to their NS counterparts, they can have expertise in other areas such as specific classroom procedures. As shown in excerpt 1, all three NNSs chime in to direct John in the correct procedure for the debate, showing their capabilities in an unofficial leadership role as a coordinator. In this situation, John's identity was more similar to a follower. However, because John is a NS, it is assumed that he has capacity to take on unofficial leader roles due to his linguistic competence over the other NNSs. John is seen giving information, providing his opinions, and asking for clarifications whenever possible. As the class continues, only one of the NNSs, Ema, continues as an unofficial leader. Even without the same linguistic competence as John, she was able to become a leader by leveraging other areas of expertise, such as her interactional abilities. This was evident in how she aligned with Yui to repair her breakdown with John (in expert 2). Furthermore, she displayed leadership in task management by continuing to facilitate discussion after John had left (in excerpt 3). There were more silences than usual (not shown in the transcript) indicating a loss of conversational direction without John's expert and unofficial leader role. It was up to Ema to pick up where John left off since she had already shown qualities of being an unofficial leader in earlier exchanges. Even without equal linguistic competence compared to John, Ema has shown that NNS can still fulfill task leadership roles such as clarifier, coordinator, and opinion seeker.

These findings have significant pedagogical implications for managing group dynamics in a classroom setting. Firstly, teachers should be aware of the predetermined assumption of the expert/NS and novice/NNS identities within group dynamics. These preconceived identities can deter students, especially NNS, from taking on leadership roles. As shown in this study, NNS students are capable of assuming expertise and leadership roles when given the opportunity. Secondly, it could be beneficial for students themselves to be aware of this dynamic. If made aware, NS students can create more openings for

NNS to take on leadership roles, allowing them to take the floor more often or seek their opinions rather than being the main provider of information. Additionally, NNS can realize their potential to take on leadership roles even without linguistic competence which may be a reason why some NNSs believe they can only stay in follower roles. Lastly, awareness of leadership roles can be made aware by explicitly teaching about the variety of task and socio-emotional roles available. Many of these roles, such as encourager and harmonizer (Dornyei & Murphy, 2003) do not necessarily need a high level of linguistic competence for the role to be fulfilled. Teachers can encourage students to take on a leadership role at the beginning of a group discussion, either by explicitly assigning one (official leader role) or allowing them to choose a role. In alignment with Hall et al. (2004)'s study of NS-NNS interactions, teachers can aim to create a welcoming environment where students "both NSs and NNSs [can construct] themselves as cooperative, fully participating agents" (p. 81). Students can use the opportunity to communicate with someone of a different linguistic background as a way to broaden their socio-cultural knowledge and hone their skills in intercultural communication.

This study was limited to four NS-NNS student interactions which may be different from other group dynamics of similar criteria. This study was also limited in its scope of analysis with many unexplored perspectives. For instance, from an intercultural communicative perspective, breakdowns and repairs could be further analyzed to find face-saving strategies. Positive or negative faces could have influenced the decisions that led the students to create their identities and roles. Other aspects that could be analyzed are personality, motivation, student autonomy, attitude towards the topic, and their relationships to each other. These factors could also have an influence on how the group dynamic was conceived. In addition, a deeper look into the specific linguistic strategies, such as turn-taking, word choice, and silence, could provide a deeper insight into the decisions and intentions behind the students' language usage.

Conclusion

Studies in the deconstruction of the expert-novice dyad in NS-NNS pair or group work (Hall et al., 2004; Vickers, 2010; Dings, 2012; Reicher & Liebscher, 2012) have challenged the past assumptions of NS taking on the expert and NNS taking on the novice role. Jacoby and Gonzales (1991) argue that the construction of the expert-novice dynamic is complicated and shifting moment by moment. Students do not have to be confined to this past assumption based on their linguistic competence. Unofficial leadership roles occur naturally and spontaneously without any criteria for having certain linguistic competence, which means NNSs can have a chance at emerging into these roles. NNSs assuming unofficial leadership roles empower them to take control of their learning experience.

This paper adds to the current body of research on the deconstruction of the expert-novice dichotomy among NS and NNS in group discussions. By further focusing on the unofficial leadership roles they have played throughout the discussion, the findings further prove that NNS have full capacity to emerge as leaders regardless of linguistic competence. While this study focused on only one group of participants, the implications can affect both teachers and students. They can be aware of the harmful effects of assuming NS to be the expert and NNS to be the novice. Students can also be encouraged to seek leadership roles regardless of their NS-NNS identity in order to broaden their learning experience during group discussions.

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Proceeding Paper

Three International Families in Japan and their Experiences with School Refusal

Catherine L. Takasugi

Abstract: Youth refusing to attend school in Japan is a silenced, confusing, and complex phenomenon reaching back almost a century. Explanatory theories and discourses have shifted through the eras and strategies for resolving school attendance problems have responded in turn. And yet, there are more youth refusing school today than ever before. In hopes of reinvigorating interest in and extending the understanding of the topic, this research uses a hermeneutic approach that asks questions that are vastly different than those informing the body of knowledge to date. Presented here are three families' experiences of school refusal and their moments of fear, breakthrough, and discovery are shared. By exploring the experience, exposing the trauma, and extending the understanding through dialogue with parents of school refusers, universal stories of hope, resilience, and belonging have emerged.

日本における若者の不登校は、沈黙し、混乱をきたしてきた複雑な現象であり、その始まりはほぼ 1 世紀前にまで遡る。説明的な理論や言説は時代とともに変化し、不登校問題を解決するための方法もそれに応じて変化してきた。それにもかかわらず、今日、かつてないほど多くの若者が不登校になっている。このテーマへの関心を再活性化し、理解を広げる期待のもと、本研究ではこれまでの知識体系とは大きく異なる問いを投げかける解釈学的なアプローチを使用する。本稿は、3 つの家族の不登校経験を紹介し、恐怖、打開、発見の瞬間を共有することを目的とする。不登校児の親との対話を通じてその経験を探求、トラウマを明らかにし、理解を広げることによって、希望、立ち直り、帰属意識に関する普遍的な物語が浮かび上がってくる。

Keywords: school refusal, biethnic, hermeneutics, Japan
キーワード: 不登校、ビエスニック、解釈学、日本

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Author Note: The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Board approved this doctoral research study (REB22-1524). The data presented herein explores the preliminary analysis of three of the ten interview transcripts produced in the research process. There is no conflict of interest. The forthcoming dissertation associated with this research will acknowledge this publication if the data is re-published without significant changes.

Three International Families in Japan and their Experiences with School Refusal

School attendance problems (SAPs) have been an educational topic in Japan for nearly a century (Nakayama, 2003). While absence from school has been a behavioral constant across the decades, the explanations, causes, discourses, and strategies to resolve the

problem have shifted through time (Maeda & Hatada, 2019; Yamazaki, 2017; Yoneyama, 2000). Notable in Japan is the nation's school attendance data recorded by the Ministry of Education, reaching as far back as the 1950s (Horiguchi, 2018), and the free public access to much of this data. *Futōkō* (school non-attendance, 不登校) is the current favored term used to refer to youth who cannot or will not attend school. It is used in preference to earlier terms such as *tōkōkyohi* (school refusal) and *tōkōkyōfushō* (school phobia) because of its comparative neutrality, especially in terms of directing blame or insinuating deficiency.

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Technology Japan (MEXT, 2009 onward), *futōkō* refers to students who are "unable to attend school for more than 30 full days a year due to physical, psychological, social, and/or emotional factors, with exceptions permitted for medical and economic reasons" (Maeda & Hatada, 2019, p. 65). Parents are aware of their child's school absence, the youth usually stays at home during the school day, and psychosomatic symptoms arise when the student attempts to go to school. It is important to note that *futōkō* differs in nature from both truancy[1] and school withdrawal[2] related absences.

The research presented here is a preliminary glimpse of the data from my doctoral studies at the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary, in Canada. My topic is focused on understanding the experience of extended school absence for bi-cultural families in Japan. Because the topic is sensitive, I spoke with the mothers, not the students themselves. Fathers were also invited, but it was the mothers who immediately and determinedly responded to the invitation to participate. Following a hermeneutic approach, I asked questions that were aimed at exploring the experience and extending the understanding of the topic. Whenever possible, I gently pried deeper into the moments in the conversation that caught my attention, piqued my senses, and investigated those instances that resonated or particularly rang true or that gave me pause. In dialogue with the parents, we created space "in which an unbearable suffering, an unspeakable pain, [could] find words" (Caputo, in Moules et al., 2015, p. xi). I was gifted with images, stories, vulnerabilities, and honesty that shook my being, gave me hope, and reinforced so powerfully why this work needs to be done.

The Approach

The hermeneutic approach that shapes this research demands that I acknowledge my own histories and those that set the context of this research. Moules et al. (2015) reflect on the wisdom of Hans-Georg Gadamer, a hermeneut of immeasurable impact who suggested that:

> we cannot step over our shadows; we are connected in a continuous thread with our past, with traditions, and with our ancestors, living out traditions that have been bequeathed to us by others. The echoes of history are always inadvertently and *deliberately* inviting us into both past and new ways of being in the present and, thus, we live in a world that recedes into the past and extends into the future. Rather than

[1] Truancy is often tied to delinquent behaviors, low academic scores, and parents being unaware of the school absences (Ingul & Havik, 2021).

[2] School withdrawal is absence from school that is sanctioned by parents and is often due to economic, ideological, legal, or medical circumstances (Gren-Landell, 2021a). Specific to Japan, and under the umbrella of school withdrawal the term '*young carer'* is used to refer to young people who are students who cannot attend school because they are needed at home to care for one or more family members.

> pitting ourselves against history, we therefore need to *remember*, *recollect*, and *recall* it. (p. 1-2)

As a mother, immigrant, researcher raising bi-ethnic children in Japan, I carry my histories, identities, and prejudices along this research path with me. My shadow, as Gadamer would call it, directly influences every aspect of this work, from being drawn to the topic to the stories or silences I hear and the connections I perceive. It should come as no surprise then that both my children have at times refused or resisted school in Japan. My son vehemently, my daughter persistently. In my son's case, the refusal was the result of damage incurred by his second-grade homeroom teacher, a man who used fear, humiliation, and public shaming techniques to control his class. It took years to repair and rebuild my son's self-esteem. For my daughter, school resistance seems to stem from somewhere else entirely. She is consistently othered, albeit positively for the most part, by her appearance, intelligence, and artistic excellence. As a result, sense of belonging at school is perpetually elusive. My story vibrates with a similar tension as those of the mothers I talked to; there is a familiar rhythm and rhyme to our understanding. But each of our stories, our singular situations, are shaded differently. It is in these differences that I am currently swirling, feeling, catching, releasing, playing, and processing. This work, like myself, is not there yet. It is hesitantly emerging, struggling and striving, actively becoming.

The Families

Fragments of interview data from the Aoki, Baker, and Kawaguchi families' interviews begin to pull me, have unrelentingly hooked me, and demand that I take notice. The analysis is incomplete, but there are edges and shapes beginning to form, and the work unhurriedly reveals its rich, dark tones. And yet, there is something already there, something insistent which compels me to share these stories before I am ready, before the conclusions are developed, while I am still uncertain, and in the flux of understanding.

All the families discussed in this research live in Japan, and the children have one parent who is Japanese and one parent who is not. Trauma and turmoil, uncertainty and fear, these throb through the heartbeat of the work. But, in the cracks, between the words, in the silence and pauses, breath even, there is also a strength and beauty. There is admiration for the sheer will of their child, for being courageous, for understanding themselves, and for going against the powerful rushing unrelenting flow of what society demands of them. Here are a handful of sharp fragments of their stories.

The Aoki[3] Family

Henrietta is the mother of Liana, a 2nd year high school (HS2) student, and Jason, a 2nd year junior high (JHS2) school student. Henrietta's husband is Japanese. Both Liana and Jason have been diagnosed with some form of neurodiversity, and both have experienced extended school non-attendance.

Returning to Japan after a summer abroad, both Liana and Jason refused to go back to school for the Fall term. Henrietta remembers it was completely unexpected. It was baffling, frightening, and inexplicable for Henrietta, who thought that the school year had begun so well. As both kids were unhappy and not going to school, Henrietta questioned whether "being here [in Japan], is this really wrong for them?". Besides living in Japan and the multitude of cultural and educational implications it encompasses, device usage

[3] Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of all the families.

and personal parenting style also came into question. Everything was questioned, but clear answers were not forthcoming.

Thankfully, Jason was attending school regularly again by mid-October, but Liana, who as a high school student had more at stake, was struggling to attend at all, and concern was mounting regarding her mental and emotional wellness. Liana, an academically inclined student, had worked hard to get into this particular, rather elite, school. She was also initially achieving extremely well academically. That is, until she suddenly, simply, completely, could not go. As high school is not compulsory education in Japan, attendance can be a factor in whether a student is admitted to the next grade or can graduate. With Liana accruing so many absences, her school made it clear that the family needed a formal diagnosis, and official documentation, in order for Liana's non-attendance to be excused and for reasonable accommodations to be arranged. It was also indicated that if this could not be obtained within a certain time, or her scores on her final exams were insufficient, then perhaps a different school might better suit Liana. It was not a threat exactly, but pressure to abide by certain conditions was present. At great expense and haste, the family set out on a path of diagnosis, expecting something possibly along the lines of social anxiety or depression. When autism was diagnosed, the family was utterly dumbfounded. How could Liana, a high school student, be autistic without them knowing? Henrietta shares that as she grew to accept the unexpected diagnosis, she could look at Liana's absences and other irrational (to her) behaviors differently. Shifts in understanding Liana took place. Priorities also shifted.

Through this refusal experience, Henrietta said the importance of education was reevaluated; it was still important, but it was no longer held in such high esteem. There was a letting go of expectations and ambitions, personal and societal, and a stepping back from trying to "fix" things. A re-centering happened, one where happiness and connection with family and friends were honored.

Hikikomori[4]

Henrietta admitted that her worst fear was that Liana would eventually become so depressed that she would no longer come out of her room. Henrietta understands the ramifications of school non-attendance; however, *hikikomori* was considered possible and far more damaging. This fear drove Henrietta to re-examine and discard typical strategies of "if you are not going to school, you can't go and hang out with your friends after school." Instead, Henrietta found that "what is most important to me is that Liana gets out of bed, she gets out of her room, that she has a social life." So, karaoke, dinner plans, or other fun activities with friends were encouraged regardless of school attendance. This is significant since this strategy is in opposition to what some school refusal researchers have suggested: take away all interesting, comfortable, or enticing things at home, until school seems like the better choice. Gonzalves and Kearney (2021) in particular suggest that some SAPs are "maintained by positive reinforcement" (p. 78), whereby school absence is unintentionally exacerbated when youth pursue and are rewarded with parental attention or tangible benefits outside of school. Perhaps noteworthy, Gonzalves and Kearney's research is not Japan-specific. This phenomenon of 'positive reinforcement' does not appear to be at play in the Aoki family, and it further reinforces a preliminary impression that certain cultural or historical elements that contribute to school non-

[4] Hikikomori- sometimes referred to as 'shut-ins' is a social phenomenon whereby people withdraw from society and remain isolated in their homes for extended periods. Hikikomori has been connected to school refusal by The Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (MHLW, 2003) who reported that 41% of *hikikomori* experienced *futōkō* in the past.

attendance in Japan, may not be as significant a factor in other cultures. Further analysis will hopefully add to this point of discussion.

The Aoki family is constantly working through their plans of action in ways that make sense for them, in ways that support Liana academically and in her development of self. Identity, fitting in, and a sense of belonging in relation to school refusal are overarching ideas explored in this study. Henrietta poignantly reflects "it's like [Liana]'s definitely struggling to *be*, …, it is like she is really struggling to work out who she is, how to be her, and how to have the confidence to be her". Bi-ethnicity may or may not be contributing to this restlessness of identity. It is quite possibly a vast combination of factors or even just a natural transitional struggle in Liana's journey to understanding and becoming who she hopes to be.

The Baker Family

Gillian and her husband have three children. Lisa (JHS3), the youngest, has experienced chronic school refusal since the second grade of elementary school. Their oldest child, now an adult, also had intermittent attendance challenges, especially in high school, while their middle child (HS) determinedly attends school and has an exemplary attendance record. Gillian and her husband always insisted that Lisa attend school, so she was almost never absent unless she was obviously very sick. Therefore, like many families I talked to, much of her school refusal would not be reflected in the national statistics; she may have spent all or part of the day in the nurse's room, but she invariably attended school. Lisa regularly complained of headaches and stomachaches; she also had challenges when it came to making friends.

Lisa's resistance to school, her physical complaints, and her struggles to fit in and belong to a friend group were constant concerns for the Bakers. Gillian recalls, around the fifth grade of elementary school, the complaints became much more pronounced and waking Lisa up and getting her out of bed was almost impossible. The family often took her to the doctor, but they never found anything to be concerned about. For the most part, Lisa learned to silence her complaints, but one day in the first year of junior high school, she took her mother aside and confided, "I don't feel good, and I don't think it's normal…I never feel okay, something always hurts". This was a turning point for Gillian. She had finally really heard Lisa. A subsequent trip to the doctor picked up a particular oddity in Lisa's symptoms, which eventually led to a diagnosis of an autonomic nervous system disorder, one that explained her inability to wake up and go to school. For years, Lisa had been suffering, but due to her long history of school refusal and how it had presented in multiple mysterious physical and emotional ways, when she later became ill, no one recognized the emergence of a more serious medical issue.

Over the years, school had become a location of trauma for Lisa. Friendships were fleeting; she was often feeling unwell, and Lisa was not fitting in. Even Lisa's learning was suffering as she was increasingly unable to retain information. The family accessed help through the city office, school counselors, doctors, and psychiatrists. In junior high school, the psychiatrist working through the issues with the family suggested: "don't make her go to school, and don't tell her that she needs to go to school. Every day that you try to get her to go, and she is not able to go, she is going to feel like she is disappointing you. You can think of other options later, but right now, she is very traumatized". That trauma played out in linguistic terms as well. According to her psychiatrist, when Lisa is spoken to in Japanese, she "dissociates", and her mind goes "somewhere else". For a time, she was unable to process or recall information spoken in Japanese and reading in Japanese resulted in dramatic irrational emotional outbursts. In contrast, written and verbal encounters with the English language did not result in any trauma response.

Guilt

What comes through most significantly in the conversations with Gillian is the guilt she felt as a mother for not listening sooner, for insisting that Lisa attended school when she was unwell, and for being part of the problem. In hindsight, Gillian criticizes herself for not registering Lisa's complaints as serious and for not being the advocate for her child that she should have been. She cringes as she recalls trusting the teacher's accounts of events above those of her child. She is ashamed to recall that when micro-aggressions were directed at Lisa, Gillian would ask her daughter what she might have done to invite those inflictions. Gillian is appalled that she inadequately answered Lisa's persistent calls for help.

The sessions with the psychiatrist made Gillian aware that the family's insistence on attendance was damaging to Lisa's mental health, and the doctor's diagnosis of illness brought a new perspective to Lisa's physical complaints. After that, the Baker parents began questioning and undoing their deep-held belief that school equates to learning. Gillian and her husband "stopped enforcing" their strict attendance policy and started to recalibrate and find a new balance of where formal education fit in Lisa's life. Gillian and her husband are now working hard to rebuild trust with their daughter so that she can once again learn to trust herself. When Lisa berates herself for her current school absences or for her academic performance being under par, they now adamantly remind her, "No, you were so brave. You knew something was wrong. You were so brave to go against us, and I'm so proud of you for doing that because you stopped this thing that was harmful, and even… it must have been so scary for you to go against us…. you saved yourself, and you saved us". Gillian insists that they regularly feel lost, they still struggle, and they continue to have no solid solutions regarding Lisa's academic attendance or prospects. However, in conversation with Gillian it is evident that it is not because of a lack of resources, care, or effort.

The Kawaguchi Family

Carrie is married to a Japanese man, and together they have a son, Kairu (JHS3). Extreme school resistance began as early as kindergarten and continued until the later years of elementary school. She tells me that Kairu "never missed a day of school. But he was late every day. He was refusing, but he didn't have a choice, so he went". At times Kairu was physically forced or verbally coerced to attend school. In the early elementary years, Carrie was responsible for Kairu's upbringing, almost entirely independently, as her husband was busy with a complicated work situation that made him unavailable to support Carrie or Kairu in their school attendance struggles. In the later elementary years, when Kairu began attending school more regularly, the role of primary caregiver reversed dramatically, and Kairu's father took over the raising and educational decision-making for Kairu. This father-led parenting style and Kairu's consistent attendance at school currently remain. So, at first glance, Kairu's school attendance problems might be considered resolved. However, there are many lingering factors that make this family's experience one that needs to be shared.

Violence

Violence is not a stranger to Japanese academic culture. Unfortunately, absenteeism tends to exacerbate this phenomenon. According to Yoneyama (2000), many school refusers have thoughts of suicide, envision violence towards others and/or themselves, and a fundamental questioning about self-hood is often undertaken. Saito (2019) concurs, suggesting that fear and shame create a culture of secrecy around school non-attendance, and

episodes of violence towards family members are common. Kairu and Carrie's story demonstrates how violence may materialize when a family is desperate for help and none, or not enough, is forthcoming.

While Kairu was still young, Carrie would carry Kairu down the three flights of apartment stairs, then return for his randoseru, and insert both child and bag into their vehicle and drive him to school. While Carrie was fetching the backpack, Kairu would sometimes take off through the neighborhood, and a search would ensue; at times neighbors would help. Carrie's voice escalates as she bravely recounts a morning when her patience ran out. She says:

> So, one of these times, when I'm trying to lock all the doors and I'm trying to drive, and I'm late [for work]. I was just absolutely at the end of my tether. I went to the City Education Center, I had never been there before, I just went. I parked. I dragged my son up the stairs to the reception, and I said "I need to talk to somebody. I have a serious problem. Somebody needs to look after my son. I need to go to work". And they were of course completely baffled by me and didn't know what to do. I was crying, so they gave me a box of tissues. And, I just remember, I picked it up and I threw it across the room and then I said "I'm sorry. I'm going. He's your responsibility. You take care of him. I'm going to work".

The frustration felt by Carrie is palpable; the determination of Kairu to refuse school is remarkable. Over several years Carrie and Kairu's needs continued to clash, and the violence escalated. Kairu would frequently propel abusive and hateful language at his mother and the furious outbursts eventually culminated with Kairu threatening Carrie with a knife. Neither were physically injured in this incident, but in talking with Carrie it is apparent that significant emotional scars remain.

Blame

Carrie's experience as a mother of a child who would not go to school was hard to listen to. It was filled with grief, regret, loneliness, but also this unwavering hope that one day things would get better and her son would accept her again. Carrie told me, "I want to blame the school. The school is an easy target. But, if you think about it for a little while, you're just like, well, no, they really did their best". She shared that teachers from the school would talk to Kairu over speaker phone and gently invite him to school. Carrie holding the phone over the bed where Kairu was hiding under the sheets. The vice principal even came to the house to gather him out of bed and get him to school. There were many people working toward getting Kairu to school. But Carrie felt judged by other parents, by her son, and by her husband. However, worst of all, Carrie blamed herself, stating her inability to speak Japanese or her inadeptness regarding the implicit cultural knowledge needed to raise a child in Japan and put them through school. Both Carrie and Kairu suffered immensely during this period of their lives.

One way Carrie was able to get through this experience was by continuing to work. Carrie told me that she felt sorry for her son and that she clung to her work during that school refusal period, saying that it was one of the wonderful things that sustained her during that time. She shares, "I prioritized my work. It kept me afloat. It gave me self-worth". Years later, she still questions herself and wishes that she had perhaps taken a different stance altogether, she mused that "from the start I should have just let him stay home".

Carrie now holds a marginal space in the household where there is little communication between her and Kairu, and her and her husband. This functions for them at the moment, but it is not ideal. Carrie blamed herself for her lack of proficiency in Japanese

and not being able to teach her son kanji. She blamed herself for continuing to work, clinging determinedly to employment that made her feel valued. Years later, she deeply questioned herself for forcing Kairu to go to school. Excluded, separated, and pushed away by her son and husband, she stays, she firmly plants herself as a person of worth and value in this family. She is not going anywhere. Carrie is a pillar of determination and refuses to give up or give in. She holds her space peacefully, patiently, and persistently. She is grace embodied. Her story breaks me and builds me. It is complicated, like all families, like all struggles, like all people. But I notice that for me, her story somehow hurts especially.

Concluding Thoughts

Identity, fitting in, becoming, and a sense of belonging are areas that I was anticipating discussing with the mothers. Part of me is certain that these elements are central to understanding the experience of school refusal for international families. Perhaps they are, but it seems not in the ways I initially imagined. I continue to work with the interview data to further unconceal, to share, to examine in depth the individual instances of school refusal, then to look at them with more universal lenses, and eventually deepen the understanding of what it means for a family when a child in Japan is unable to attend school.

Initially, every family was focused on fixing the problem, solving the issue, removing the confusion, and resolving the absenteeism. How hard they pushed, how long they pressed, and what strategies they used varied tremendously. Invariably, the mothers were certain of one thing only. That they did not have the answers. Each mother, in turn recognized how lost they themselves became through the process of their child refusing to attend school; they questioned their parenting, their life choices, and their understanding of the world. If there was hope, it was in the strength they now recognized and admired in their child. If there was regret, it manifested in wishing they had truly, deeply, undividedly listened to them earlier.

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