

Foreword

Jennie Roloff Rothman¹

Kanda University of International Studies

On June 15, 2019, the JALT Yokohama chapter hosted their annual summer Technology My Share event, where chapter and other local JALT members were invited to share practical and innovative techniques or uses of technology for the second language classroom. The members of YoJALT never fail to provide inspiring ideas and this My Share was no exception.

This special issue of *Accents Asia* comprises papers written by six of the presenters that spoke that day in June. Kayvon Havaei-Ahary explored the features and device tools available on iPads and explained how the language to use them effectively could become an integral part of the language learning experience. Gota Hayashi introduced research on a survey that he created to aid students' development of self-regulation skills and intrapersonal intelligence. Mary Nobuoka shared *The Dictionary Game*, a clever way of teaching students vocabulary while also supporting the development of critical thinking skills. Lucinda and Yusuke Okuyama shared the process by which they worked with students to develop and produce a set of reflective practice questions for EFL teachers to use for improving their practice. Finally, Paul Raine introduced *Talk Corpus*, an app to aid effective use of TED Talks in the second language classroom by helping educators identify appropriately leveled talks for student proficiency levels.

As editor of this special issue, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the support and patience of all the authors as well as the YoJALT team of officers who helped make this issue come to fruition. It was a valuable learning experience for me. As always, the ideas from this My Share gave me ideas for my own classroom, something I trust will also happen for the readers of this issues.

For any readers interested in participating in future JALT Yokohama events, please visit yojalt.org.

¹ Jennie Roloff Rothman is Principal Lecturer of Professional Development-Teacher Development in the English Language Institute at Kanda University of International Studies. Her research interests include teacher professional development, writing centers, critical thinking in EFL, and global issues in the language classroom. Correspondence can be sent to rothman-j@kanda.kuis.ac.jp

Device Tools: An alternative approach to language learning with an iPad

Kayvon Havaei-Ahary²

ABSTRACT

This paper will consider the feasibility of using device tools as an approach for language learning when using an iPad in the classroom. First, it will look at different approaches to using a mobile device in the classroom. Then, it will focus on the device tools approach by identifying the main features of an iPad, mapping language functions to a single feature, and finally demonstrating how to use an iPad for communicative purposes. Although there is little research in the area, this paper demonstrates that there is potential for language learning through device tools.

INTRODUCTION

Device Tools Definition

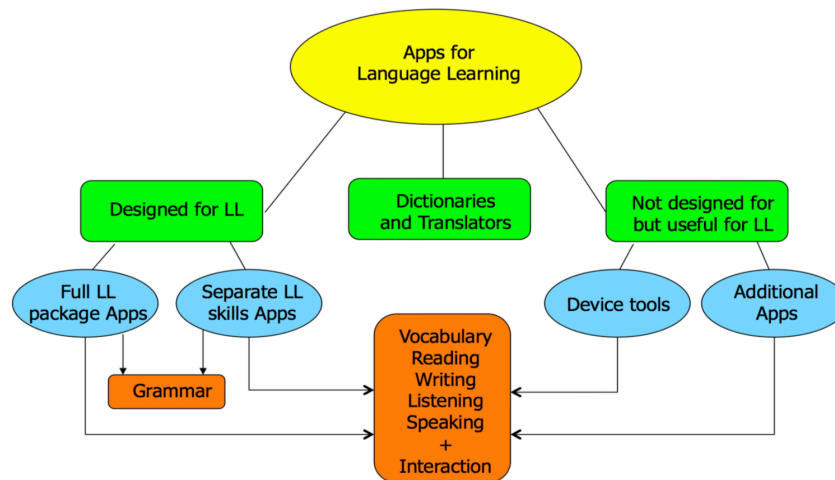
Device tools are the native apps (e.g. a note taking app, a photos app) and features (e.g. the camera, the touchscreen) that come with or pre-installed on a device. For the purposes of this paper and to provide concrete examples, ‘device tools’ will specifically be used in reference to iOS features on an iPad.

Taxonomy of Apps

MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) in the classroom offers a new dimension to the way in which students can learn and interact. Whether iPads are shared or given to each student, apps have become the ‘go to’ when trying to use iPads in the classroom. Besides social media apps and games, there are other apps designed specifically towards language learning, either as complete packages or individual skills practice (e.g. pronunciation, listening). Every year a new set of apps is released with the promise of improving language learners’ language ability. The choices can be overwhelming for teachers and students alike. In order to make the process easier, numerous taxonomies have been devised (Rosenthal Tolisano, 2012; Schrock, 2012), which categorize apps into different areas of language learning skills. Although some of these models quickly lose their relevance with the release of newer and better apps, and/or older apps becoming unavailable, Rosell-Aguilar (2017) devised a taxonomy, which looks at areas in where language learning can occur when using a device rather than identifying any specific apps (See *Figure 1*).

² Kayvon Havaei-Ahary is currently teaching and creating courses for English and Music through the use of iPads at a private high school. Correspondence should be sent to: ukkayvon@gmail.com.

FIGURE 1
Taxonomy of apps for language learning (Rosell-Aguilar, 2017, pg. 249)



At the outset he identifies three main areas in which apps can aid language learning:

Apps Designed for Language Learning

There are two types of apps designed for language learning. One type is full language learning apps, which offer a range of exercises, support, and grammatical explanations (e.g. Duolingo). Another type focuses on separate language learning skills apps, which provide training on one skill, for example, a focus on phonetics (e.g. Pronounce).

Dictionaries and Translators

These are unique resources (e.g. Google Translate) as they are suitable for both language learners and people who may not even be interested in learning the language, but need it for a specific purpose. They can be used in conjunction with a language learning app or other apps which require vocabulary or grammatical knowledge and/or input. Some online dictionaries and translators now include pronunciation, model sentences, and options to enter text by voice or writing.

Not Designed for Language Learning

Device tools, which are apps and features that come with or pre-installed on the device (e.g. the camera, the speakers, a note taking app, the settings app). Rosell-Aguilar describes that these tools are able to aid the language learning process (e.g. changing different settings, like language and keyboard, using the speech to text recognition for pronunciation practice) and also be a source for generating communication (e.g. using the messages or phone features, using the photos for communicative exchanges). Additional/third party apps, which are apps not specifically designed for language learning, but that can be tailored towards it (e.g. Anki). For example, in the app Anki, you can download different vocabulary flashcard packs.

When attempting to use an iPad for language learning most of the current literature has looked into, either the apps for language learning area or the apps not designed for language learning area, specifically, additional/third-party apps. Whilst some have been

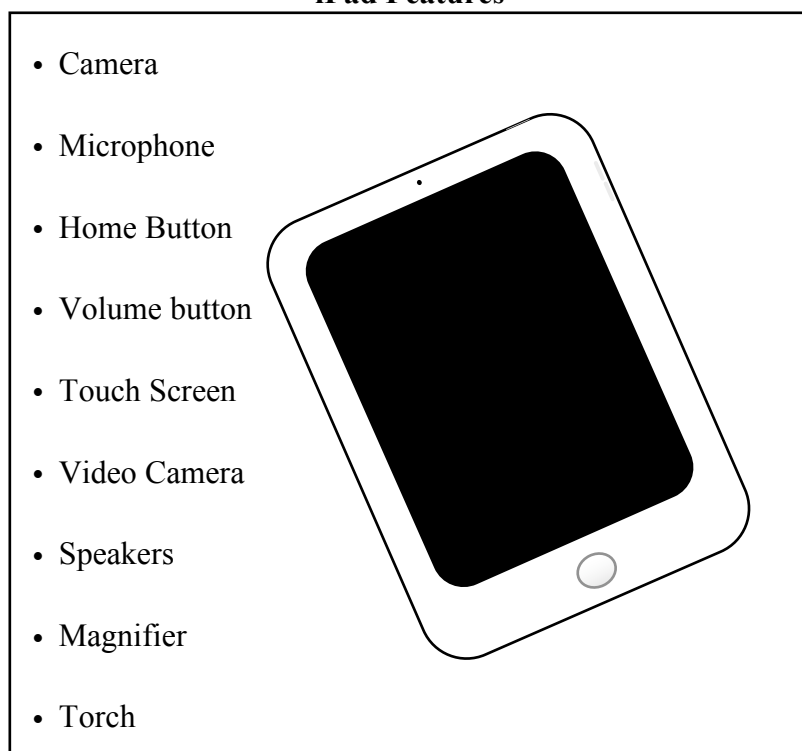
optimistic about the application of apps for language learning (Kim, 2013; Lys, 2013; Sweeney & Moore, 2012), others have been more critical, noting the lack of language instruction available and activities predominately focusing on translation (Burston, 2014; Godwin- Jones, 2011). Aguilar (2017) himself, is less optimistic about the effectiveness of apps and criticized the extent of feedback on performance being limited to a check mark if the answer is correct or a cross mark if the answer is wrong.

One area in Roswell-Aguilar's taxonomy which has had less attention, by researchers (including Rosell-Aguilar) and teachers, in terms of MALL application in the classroom and its potential for language learning is the device tools area (See *Figure 1*). This area, as described earlier, is not specifically app focused, but instead, focused on how the device itself can form the basis for language production. This paper will not argue whether device tools is a better option than using apps for language learning, but consider the feasibility of them as an alternative for using a device in the classroom. It will do so by exploring what potential the iPad offers in terms of language and communication.

iPad Features

iOS features form the core of how you interact with an iPad. More and more features are integrated with each update and release, which maximize potential for productivity and creativity. Below in *Figure 2* is a list of common features available on the iPad as soon as you get it out of the box:

FIGURE 2
iPad Features



The list above highlights the most common features and demonstrates that there are many different and unique possibilities for interaction with the iPad. A quick analysis of how these features function in natural contexts (e.g. sending a photo, changing the settings) will reveal a range of language functions (e.g. requests, commands, agree/disagree, describe) and an

abundance of language. In order to understand how these features can be used for language production, it is necessary to analyze the different functions each one can perform. The next section will look at language tied to the use of the volume buttons.

Mapping language functions to a feature: The volume buttons

The volume buttons on an iPad have two main functions: one, to adjust the volume levels; and two, to take a photo. Below is a list of different language functions that can arise when using the volume buttons feature and the phrases/sentences used to complete them:

- Commands: “Press this button to take a photo”
- Requests: “Can you turn it down a bit?”
- Preferences: “I prefer it a bit louder”
- Imperative: “Turn it up, turn it down” (When Increasing or decreasing volume)
- Inquiring: “How do you turn the volume?” (When asking for assistance)
- Explaining: “If you hold the max button it will go to max volume”
- Suggesting: “How about this?” (When setting the volume level)

Although the volume buttons may not appear to have many functions as a feature, they have a lot of functions in language. In addition, the language (and skill) is not restricted to this context, but can transfer to other devices and tech products such as TVs, home assistants, or smart home devices. By looking at features, educators can identify areas of language that will help students to interact with the iPad.

Communication built on features

The above examples demonstrated that features can provide useful language when interacting with an iPad. This section will look at how the language could function in communicative exchanges when working on an activity or building a product with an iPad. In order to construct tasks which generate the language from the features in a natural way, the purpose for using the iPad also needs to be meaningful. Therefore, a task should be devised to include both linguistic and tech aims which are necessary to complete it. Furthermore, by making the aims dependent on one another, it will ensure that neither skill dominates the other. Consider the following task:

Aim: Take a selfie with a partner and then share it with them.

Example:

A: Hey, Let's take a selfie!

B: Yeah sure.

A: Say cheese. What do you think?

B: Yeah it's Great! Can you send it to me?

A: Hmm, how do you do that?

B: Just Airdrop it to me. First, go into photos and tap on the photo. Then, tap on the share button in the bottom left. Finally tap on the icon with my name.

A: Okay. Did you get it?

B: Yeah, got it! Thanks.

From the task presented above, the following linguistic and tech needs can be derived:

Tech transaction: Take a selfie with your partner and share it with them.

Linguistic transaction: Ask to take a selfie and explain the process of sharing it.

Both transactions needed to take place in order for the task to be completed. Furthermore, the transactions are dependent on each other. For example, the process of learning how to share cannot be completed without an explanation (linguistic transaction) and the explanation cannot be completed unless the necessary actions on the iPad have been performed (tech transaction). In terms of language, the dialogue above covers a range of language functions (e.g. giving opinion, explaining, confirming). The explanation of how to share the photo demonstrates how the language from the features makes this kind of exchange possible, as it requires specific iOS gestures to explain the process (e.g. go into, tap on). Overall the task demonstrates that language from features can be developed into meaningful communicative exchanges.

CONCLUSION

This paper has considered the feasibility of using device tools as an approach for language learning when using an iPad. It identified a range of features available on an iPad and then presented possible language functions tied to the use of a single feature. Finally, it considered how to build communication on features through a task which required both linguistic and tech transactions to complete it. The examples described in this paper suggest that there is scope for language learning to be developed through interacting with the features on an iPad. Furthermore, devising activities with both a linguistic transaction and a tech transaction can make communicative exchanges around an iPad more meaningful. With more research into these types of activities and the type of language tied to iPad features, device tools could become a feasible approach to adopt in the language learning classroom.

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Building Intrapersonal Intelligence and Self-Regulation Through Open-Ended Questions

Gota Hayashi³

Tokyo Keizai University, Gakushuin University

ABSTRACT

This paper shows how a teacher made a total of sixteen open-ended intrapersonal questions for his students in his course throughout a course of the spring 2019 semester to encourage self-regulation of EFL learners at a Japanese university. Students were asked to prepare answers for twenty open-ended questions prior to the midterm exam. After the midterm, twenty additional open-ended questions were developed, totaling 40. Following a discussion of the student-population in the introduction, this article outlines the actual questions used, and how the teacher used the questions to teach the class. Readers are encouraged to flexibly use open-ended questions as a way to build rapport with the students and promote students' development of intrapersonal intelligence and self-regulation skills.

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATING STUDENTS

This section will introduce student-characteristics of a repeaters' English Communication course in spring 2019, which the teacher was also responsible for teaching the previous year. The previous year will be described hereafter as well, because the open-ended questions changed. Students are repeating because they failed once the previous year, and some students were repeating more than once. Eight students were initially on the roster, and all eight showed up and passed the course. This was unexpected, because the teacher had also been responsible for teaching the same course in fall 2018: four out of fourteen students never came to a single class, one of whom dropped out of university all-together. During one class in 2018, a student asked the teacher "*There is no purpose to college education. Why do we have to attend university?*" There was another student enrolled who was diagnosed as having an anxiety disorder. The teacher received a doctor's note in the faculty mailbox regarding her symptoms, saying that she could not always come to class because of her mental illness, and that this needed to be taken into account when teaching. The student did not show up for the final exam for fall 2018, so she had to retake the course for the second time during spring 2019. In the spring 2019 semester, another student who was enrolled in the university as a *tokutaisei*, a student who receives scholarship based on academic merit, lost his scholarship status due to poor attendance and grades. Like the student from the previous semester, he was also questioning the purpose of college education. He also seemed to have difficulties with self-regulation, which is the ability to monitor and modulate cognition, emotion, and behavior, to accomplish one's goals and/or adapt to the cognitive and social demands of specific situations (Berger, Kofman, Livneh, & Henik, 2007). Once, the

³ Gota Hayashi is a Special Lecturer at Tokyo Keizai University and part-time instructor at Gakushuin University, teaching EFL. Research interests include self-regulated learning and identity development. Correspondence should be sent to Gota Hayashi 1-7-34 Minami-cho, Tokyo, Japan, 185-8502. Email: ghayashi@tku.ac.jp

student told the teacher that he hit a customer at his part-time job in the face for being rude to him. As in fall 2018, what many students seemed to need help with was not learning EFL, but rather, learning about themselves, which entails building intrapersonal intelligence: the capacity to understand one's feelings, fears, and motivations (Gardner, 2011) for better self-regulation. As such, the following sections will first outline the theoretical background used to inform action addressing these issues, then describe the action taken.

A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE TO BUILD INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE AND TO ENCOURAGE SELF-REGULATION

In order to foster the development of intrapersonal intelligence and to encourage self-regulation, the approach used was to take a socially oriented theoretical perspective (Gao 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Palfreyman, 2011; Parks & Raymond, 2004) which suggests that language learning does not take place in a sociocultural vacuum. Rather, it is a social process in which individuals in their cultural and historical contexts are actively pursuing linguistic and non-linguistic goals each basically related to identity formation (Wray & Hajar 2014). For this reason, the learning context or “real-world situations” are “fundamental, not ancillary, to learners” (Zuengler & Miller, 2006, p. 37). From this sociocultural stance, language learners act on the world with the assistance of both social agents (e.g. family members, friends, classmates or teachers), a host of material tools (e.g. class-handouts or technology), and symbolic artefacts (e.g. language, gestures) (Kalaja, Alanen, Palvianinen, & Dufva, 2011; Kehrwald, 2013; Kuure, 2011).

Vygotsky (1978) advocated a developmental approach to experimental psychology based on sociocultural theory, which is related to the development of intrapersonal intelligence and self-regulation. He understood development to include the changes that occur in mental functioning over a span of a few weeks, a few days or even a few seconds (Lantolf & Appel, 1994). It can, therefore, be argued that the duration of a semester is enough to observe changes in the students' development of intrapersonal intelligence. Answering open-ended questions can help students reflect on the challenges that they are facing in their daily lives (Lantolf & Appel, 1994), which in turn can foster the development of intrapersonal intelligence and self-regulation. In this class, 40 open-ended questions were asked in order to get students to think deeply about themselves through Japanese and English for their development of intrapersonal intelligence as well as for the development of their self-regulatory skills. Self-regulated learning skills have a significant effect on an individual's academic performance and in-class achievement (Karabenick & Zusho, 2015; Kassab, Al-Shafei, Salem, & Otoom, 2015; Laru & Jarvela, 2015). Furthermore, developing students' intrapersonal intelligence can assist them with self-regulated learning (Zimmerman & Molylan, 2009). Asking open ended questions such as those mentioned in the following section and fostering the development of self-regulation in the classroom can promote students' academic success in the long-run.

THE 40 QUESTIONS

Since one student was repeating the course, the teacher came up with different open-ended questions from the previous semester (i.e. fall 2018) to build students' intrapersonal intelligence and self-regulation skills. Furthermore, while only 16 questions were asked during fall 2018, 40 were asked during spring 2019. The teacher found it possible to cover

two open-ended questions per period. The class met once a week on Wednesdays during third and fourth period, and the students were to answer four open-ended questions per week. They were to write a script of at least seven sentences for each, and almost all students only wrote the minimum throughout the semester. Once finished, the students showed the script they wrote to the teacher, who checked for grammar and provided 0.5 points each. Because there were four scripts total, the students could obtain two points. The students were also to memorize those and recite them in front of the teacher. When the students were successful, they received 0.5 points for each recitation. Thus, during each class period, the students received four points total. Because there were 40 questions throughout the semester, the students obtained 40 points for making and reciting those scripts. The midterm consisted of 30 percent of their grade, in which they were tested on the first 20 questions. Specifically, the students chose five questions to recite in front of the teacher, and the teacher chose one question from the list. Each question was worth 5 points, and the same was done with the final exam, except they were tested from the list of 20 questions after the midterm. The following is an example of how one student from class answered the six questions (See Appendix A) for the final exam.

Table 1
A Portion of Students’ Response to Six Open Ended Questions

Question	Student’s Response
11	“I am somewhere in between a child and an adult.”
13	“Started going to dance lessons at university and learned real hip-hop”
14	“To become a gangster who knows real hip-hop”
17	“What determines a person’s self-worth is one’s heart.”
19	“Importance of friendship through dance”
20	“The most meaningful experience was dance”

CONCLUSION

By having students think of extended answers to 40 open-ended questions throughout the semester, the students become more reflective of their thoughts. Through reflection and output, they are building intrapersonal intelligence and learning to regulate themselves better, in addition to communicating deeply in their target language. Another student answered Question 1 (See Appendix A). The student said that she learned the importance of being independent, because at university, she has to decide her own schedule. She also mentioned that because her teacher in class does not become angry when she does not attend class, she needs to motivate herself to attend class instead of using the teachers’ anger to push her to attend. She said that she learned that managing her own schedule is useful for living alone and working in the future. This was a response during the final exam of spring 2019 from the student who had an anxiety disorder. This specific case offers can encourage EFL teachers to reflect on how they understand their students. When an EFL teacher in the university context hears that a colleague is in charge of students from a repeater’s course, he or she may automatically assume that many of these students are just demotivated and lazy. However,

understanding the students' stories through open-ended questions not only helps build students' abilities to have deep conversations in the target language, intrapersonal intelligence, and self-regulation skills, but it also lets teachers understand the students are unique individuals and the circumstances under which the learners are taking the course.

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APPENDIX A: 40 QUESTIONS

Final Exam Questions (You Select Five, and I Select One)

1. What is an ideal life to you, and how did your way of thinking change over time?
2. What are three reasons why traveling might be worthwhile to people?
3. What is worthwhile work to you, and how are your ideas similar and different from those around you?
4. What was one shocking experience that you have had, and what lessons did you learn from it?
5. What is your ideal balance between work and play? How do you think that balance will be different after you graduate from university?
6. In what ways can helping others help yourself?
7. What is the difference between a “good marriage” and a “bad marriage”?
8. What is attractive about the idea of living abroad for college students?
9. What are the reasons people are for and against abortion, and what is your position on this issue?
10. What are the reasons why people decide to and or not decide to have children?
11. What are the differences between how children regulate their emotions and how adults regulate their emotions?
12. Is love and hate opposite sides of the same coin? Support your answer with examples.
13. What major life experiences have shaped your identity?
14. What determines a person’s sense of self-worth?
15. What kind of person do you want to be remembered as, and why?
16. If you were to pass away at the end of the day today, who do you think people will remember you as, and why?
17. What is one experience that you want to have before you pass away, and why?
18. What role do rituals such as weddings and graduation ceremonies play in our society?
19. What have you learned through experiences at university so far, and how relevant do you think those experiences will be for your future?
20. What is the most meaningful experience you have had in your life, and why and how is that the most meaningful?

Cultivating the 21st Century “4 Cs” in Language Classes

Mary Nobuoka⁴

Keio University, Waseda University

ABSTRACT

Language teachers are often looking for fun activities that will promote language learning. However, with the fast-paced changes in the job market, while language skills are an asset for job seekers, other important skills also need to be cultivated to help students remain competitive. The top ranked skills, commonly referred to as 21st century skills, according to business leaders and the World Economic Forum are critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity (Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990; Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe & Terry, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2018). One fun activity that promotes all of these skills is *The Dictionary Game*.

INTRODUCTION

The world is changing quickly. Jobs are being automated and artificial intelligence is being utilized more; however, business leaders have been reporting for decades that graduates lack the skills needed for today’s job market (Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990). In addition to basic skills, such as reading, writing, and math, four core skills needed are: critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity, also referred to as 21st century skills (Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990; Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe, & Terry, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2018). One fun activity that fosters these skills is *The Dictionary Game*, also known as *Fictionary*. Similar board games include *Balderdash*, and *Dictionary Dabble*. *The Dictionary Game* is a bluffing game in which students write made-up definitions for low-frequency words in order to bluff or trick other teams into selecting their team’s definition, and then try to guess the real meaning for points. While students build these skills in a playful manner, they are also using and improving their language skills.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Critical Thinking

In *The Dictionary Game*, students must use their critical thinking in order to conform their “answers” to the way an English-English dictionary presents the definition of various

⁴ Mary Nobuoka has been teaching EFL and academic skills in Japan since 1994. Her current research includes leadership and soft skills needed for today’s workforce. Correspondence should be sent to: m.nobuoka@gmail.com

parts of speech. For example, if the students are creating a definition for the adjective “roguse”, they need to construct the definition so that the meaning describes an adjective. Likewise, a noun needs to be written as a person, place, thing, or idea. The students also need to analyze each definition provided by all the teams to think about which definition is probably the real one and which ones were written by their fellow classmates.

Collaboration

Since the students are working in small groups in this game, they need to collaborate to create their team’s definition. Each member of the team gives input or makes improvements on the team’s submission. Speaking together, students will need to negotiate the meaning of the language and how they wish to present their ideas in writing.

Communication

The team has to communicate in order to create their own definition and also to decide which definition they will choose in the second half of the round. The communication occurs through speaking and through putting their ideas in writing. The team members may also communicate about strategies they can utilize in order to gain more points.

Creativity

Because the words used in this game are low frequency, it is very unlikely that students will know the real meaning of the words. Therefore, students will be using their imagination to create their own unique definitions. One aspect of exercising creativity is working with rules. Students need to formulate their definitions to match the assigned word’s part of speech (See more below) but they also need to create a “new meaning” without any context. This forces students to think outside the box.

Language Learning

The Dictionary Game is not a vocabulary building game, nor merely a guessing game, but rather it is a writing exercise. Students will become more aware of the parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) as well as how definitions are presented in a dictionary. This activity includes the meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, and language focused learning of Paul Nation’s four strands. The four strands are necessary elements for creating balance in a language course (Nation & Yamamoto, 2012). The language activities incorporating the four strands in the *The Dictionary Game* are: listening, which is meaning-focused input; speaking and writing, which are meaning-focused output; and language focused learning, which “involves deliberate attention to language features” (Nation & Yamamoto, 2012, p. 167). Language focused learning includes recognizing the parts of speech and how definitions of words are presented in an English-English dictionary.

HOW TO PLAY

To play this game teachers will need an online electronic dictionary with a “Word of the Day” feature. These words are usually obscure, guaranteeing that the students will not be familiar with them. Some dictionaries which have free apps or are accessible online include *Dictionary.com* and *Merriam-Webster*. It is important to remind the students that they do *not* need to know the word before play begins. Other materials needed include slips of paper (preferably recycled paper with one side blank), approximately 5cm by 10cm, and writing instruments.

Step one: Divide the students into teams of two, three, or four people. Ideally, the game would have four to six teams playing against each other. In a mixed level class, try to group stronger and weaker students together so that there is no team with all weaker proficiencies playing against a much stronger team. The teams then think of team names, using only words from the target language. In other words, if the class is an EFL course, the teams can only use English words to create their team names. The teacher (or students) write the team names on the board.

Step two: The teacher explains how the game is played and the rules. The main rule is that students may not use their own dictionaries to see what the word means nor to look for information when forming their own definitions. They need to use their imaginations. For spelling questions, students can consult with the teacher.

Step three: The teacher selects a “Word of the Day” from the dictionary app and writes the word on the board. They also write the part of speech and give the pronunciation of the word. The dictionary apps usually have a pronunciation feature which the teacher can play for the students. The pronunciation can also be written on the board. For example:

fealty
(noun)
/FEE ul tee/

Step four: Students work with their teams to create a definition for the word. Each team writes their unique definition and their team name on the paper slips. The students will need to speak quietly together so that other teams cannot hear what they are planning. If students need to ask the teacher a question, they also need to do so quietly. At this time, the teacher writes the *real* definition on a slip paper without showing any of the students.

Step five: After a set time (depending on the level of the students, two minutes is probably enough), the teacher collects the papers from each group. The teacher mixes all the slips of paper up and then assigns each definition a number rather than divulging the team names. The teacher reads the number and each definition while the students listen and think about which definition is the real one. Repeat each number and definition a second time, then let the teams consult amongst themselves about which definition they want to choose.

Step six: Each team declares which number they think is the correct definition. Note that some teams might choose their own definition to try to bluff and get the other teams to choose their own team’s word instead of the real definition or another team’s definition. This

is allowed and can help or hinder a team. One way to discourage this is to give more points for guessing the real definition. For example, typically one point is given to a team for each team that chooses their definition, but two points are given for guessing the correct meaning. It is possible to increase the points to three points for guessing the correct meaning to motivate students to not choose their own team's definition. Also, changing the number of points each round is a fun way to make students deal with ambiguity – not knowing what the point system will be each round. This also draws upon their critical thinking skills because they have to think and guess more strategically in response to the ambiguity.

Step seven: The teacher keeps a record of which team guesses which definition by writing the number on the left side of each team's name in red.

Step eight: The teacher announces which team wrote which definition and the real definition. Suspense can be created by carefully choosing the order of how the definitions are announced. Usually it is more suspenseful to say the real definition at the end; however, if several teams have chosen another team's definition, it might be more fun to save that definition for last.

Step nine: The teacher writes the points each team has earned on the board. As written above, more points are awarded for guessing the correct definition. A team gets one point for each team that chose their definition. In other words, for example, if three teams chose the Apple Team's word, the Apple Team gets three points. If the Apple Team also chose the correct definition, they get two points and then have a total of five points in that round.

Step ten: The teacher can briefly share some interesting points about the definitions the students created, some fun facts about the word, its history, a look at prefixes, roots, or suffixes to help students gain more awareness about the language.

Repeat this pattern for several rounds using different low-frequency words for each round. Again, it is important to remember that this is *not* a vocabulary building game, so the goal is not for the students to know or remember the correct definition. The goal is for students to communicate in the target language, so the teacher may need to encourage students to use the target language at all times rather than their native tongue. If necessary, go over phrases that students might need, for example: "Could you repeat the third definition?" or "We choose number five."

When a team comes close to the real definition, the teacher can read each one separately (letting students know that two definitions are similar, but *not* revealing that one of them is the real one). Or if a team attempt is very close, combine the two definitions by only reading the one that the students wrote. In this way, the team that came close to the real definition will not know that their own creation is also the "real" one.

Variations

For variation, the game can focus on one part of speech, such as nouns only, so that students can utilize fixed phrases such as "a person who...", "a thing that...", "a place where..." Focusing on only one part of speech when the game is first played is a good technique for students to deeply explore how to describe verbs or adjectives, for example.

The repetition also helps students remember the names of the parts of speech without relying on their native language.

For a greater challenge, rather than single words, lines from famous movies or plays, or from poetry can be used. The teacher provides the first few lines of dialogue or poetry and each student team adds or creates the last line. The teams then guess which line they think is correct.

CONCLUSION

The Dictionary Game is a fun-filled activity that promotes not only language skills, but also critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. These 21st century skills are in demand for the rapidly changing work force as technology takes over more jobs and as workers need to be able to problem solve in teams. In addition, it is a rich language-learning activity that utilizes three of the four strands that make up “a well-balanced language course” (Nation & Yamamoto, 2012, p. 167).

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Co-developing a Reflective Practice Tool for Native EFL Teachers in Japan: A Youth Participatory Evaluation Approach

Yusuke Okuyama⁵

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Keio University and National Defense Academy, Japan

Lucinda Okuyama⁶

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and National Defense Academy, Japan

ABSTRACT

Traditional reflective practice models are highly Westernized and not culturally sensitive. This article provides a critique on popular reflective practices and investigates what suggestion Japanese students have for native EFL teachers to enhance their teaching skills through context specific reflective practice. Utilizing a ‘Youth Participatory Evaluation’ (YPE) approach, questionnaires and a focus group were administered. The student questionnaire of 64 EFL students identified that positive demeanor, awareness of students’ non-verbal communication, interactive classes, time consciousness and cross-cultural awareness were significant areas for EFL teachers’ growth and development. Following the questionnaire, a focus group of students co-designed a reflective tool based on the data collected from the questionnaire. The findings indicate that traditional reflective practice needs to evolve to move beyond excessive introspection and move towards a more inclusive and cross-cultural paradigm. This article will introduce the tool, describe how it was co-developed and justify the rationale for the YPE approach.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of English education has developed significantly since the 1980s (Tajik & Pakzad, 2016). During this period, teachers were not yet perceived as needing to “make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs” (Borg, 2003, pg. 81). On the contrary, teachers were seen as mechanisms to produce rote learning, a means to an end. Thankfully these opinions are changing to include a more holistic view of teaching (Tajik & Pakzad, 2016; Johnson, 2006). Teachers are increasingly expected to be critical of their own teaching practice and to modify their performance based on reflections of their professional experience (Tajik & Pakzad, 2016).

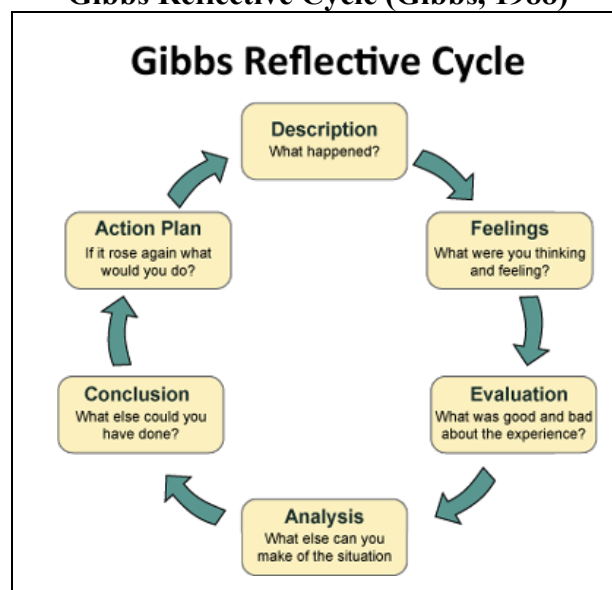
⁵ Yusuke Okuyama is a Community Psychologist, Liaison Interpreter and Lecturer. His research interests include Community Intervention and Intercultural Communication. Correspondence should be sent to: yus.okuyama@gmail.com.

⁶ Lucinda Okuyama is a Lecturer and Researcher. Her research interests include Community Psychology, English for Specific Purposes and Teaching with Technology. Correspondence should be sent to: lucinda.okuyama@gmail.com.

Some define reflective practice as the practice of “looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works, a process of self-observation and self-evaluation” (Tice, 2004, para. 1). However, this approach may be limited due to its exclusive introspective nature. It seems that the importance of reflective practice is generally emphasized in pre-teacher training programs and little emphasis is placed on supporting busy teachers to engage in reflective practice. Student feedback is often gained by universities at the end of the semester as a means to establish quality control. The data is often collected too late and it is not designed to improve teaching but to evaluate teacher performance. Similarly, peer observations seem forced, demanding and often become just another teacher performance evaluation rather than a process to generate meaningful feedback and inspire growth and change. It appears that little thought is given to cross-cultural feedback from Japanese students’ perspectives concerning class observations. Moreover, when teachers do engage in reflective practice, they often utilize culturally and contextually inappropriate reflective tools.

For example, popular and more traditional models of reflective practice such as that of Gibbs (1988) in *Figure 1* below, appear to be disproportionately introspective as they prompt the person reflecting to describe the situation, their feelings, analyze the situation and devise an action plan based on their conclusions. This process in turn, silences students’ voices and without consulting students, teachers run the risk of confirming their own biases.

FIGURE 1
Gibbs Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988)



Upon critically examining this model, one has to wonder if it is culturally appropriate and suitable in the context of Japanese university settings. Does this model enforce a highly Westernized and individualized means to reflective practice? The aim of this study is to shed some light on the experiences of Japanese university students and highlight the advice they have for native EFL teachers through the development of a reflective tool. The following section will address the methodological component of this study.

METHOD

This study utilized a ‘Youth Participatory Evaluation’ (YPE) methodology. The YPE approach engages students in the research process to influence and evaluate the programs that serve them. Students play an active role in various stages of the research and develop knowledge about their experiences that can be put to use (Flores, 2007; Powers & Tiffany, 2006). In this study, students not only answered the questionnaire, but also engaged in analyzing the data and creating the reflective tool based on their experiences with native EFL teachers in Japanese universities.

Procedures

Data was collected between June and July 2019 and participants were recruited from a national university in Japan. University students were recruited based on their level of English. The rationale for this was to ensure that students had conversational English to comfortably answer the questionnaire and discuss topics in the focus group. Participants were recruited by sending an electronic link via the class Edmodo⁷ page. Students were informed that (1) their participation was voluntary, (2) their responses would be anonymous, and (3) their answers would not affect their grades.

Part A: Questionnaire

A sample size of 63 students completed a Google Forms⁸ electronic questionnaire (See Appendix 1). In addition to standard questions to determine demographics, the questionnaire included two open ended questions:

- Students were asked to list approximately three reflective questions they think Native English-speaking teachers should ask themselves in order to be more effective English teachers in Japanese universities.
- Students were asked to provide some advice to Native EFL teachers in Japanese universities that would help them to improve their teaching.

TABLE 1
Questionnaire: Demographic Data (63 students)

Demographic Data		Number	Percentage
Ethnicity	Japanese	61	97%
	Other	2	3%
Gender	Female	31	49%
	Male	32	51%
Age	18-20	53	84%

⁷ Edmodo is an educational “social networking platform” specifically designed for learning and “has been recognized as one of the popular online learning tools used in the world” (Okumura, 2016, p. 36).

⁸ Google Forms is a free web-based application that is used to create electronic forms for data collection purposes.

	21-23	7	11%
	24-26	1	2%
	Unknown	2	3%

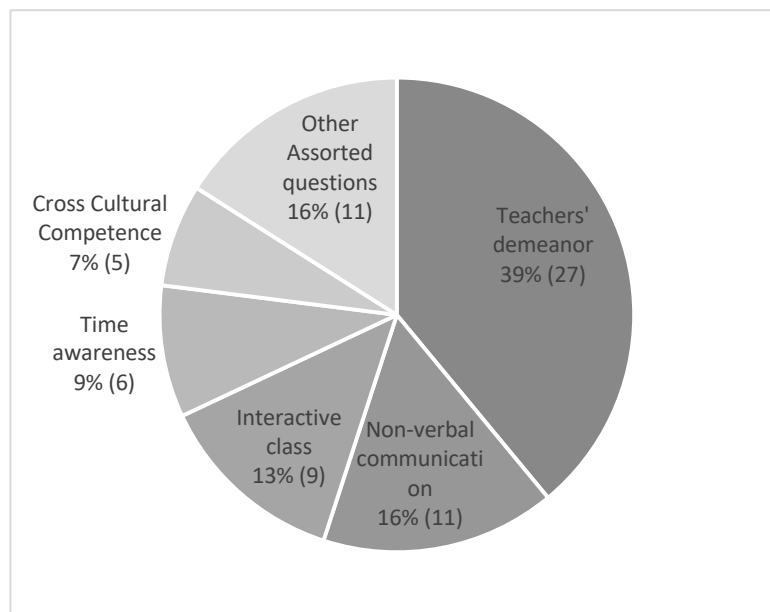
Part B: Focus Group

The focus group participants analyzed the questionnaire data that was generated by Google Forms. This methodological decision was based on the YPE approach which states that young people should be active participants in various stages of the research process (Flores, 2007; Powers & Tiffany, 2006). The focus group participants were asked to analyze the qualitative data (student-generated questions) by categorizing the data according to themes in small groups (See Appendix 2). Subsequently, a follow up discussion was conducted to clarify the meaning and importance of the data. As a result, students categorized and listed the 20 most important reflective questions for Native EFL Teachers working in Japanese universities. The data collected in the focus group was captured by note taking. The focus group consisted of 16 Japanese students between the ages of 18-20 and included 56% (9) female and 44% (7) male students.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The focus group participants categorized the data according to the key themes depicted in the graph below:

FIGURE 2
Key Themes Identified in the Data



Teachers' Demeanor

As can be seen in the graph above, a significant amount of questions created by students were related to teachers' demeanor. Students noted that a negative demeanor creates confusion and induces unnecessary anxiety. More importantly, students clearly highlighted an issue regarding native teachers' frustration when instructions were not followed by the students. According to the students, "teachers became angry and scolded us". To this point, some other important reflections included:

"An English teacher became angry without reason...insufficient explanations"

"Being angry when we misunderstood what teacher said"

"He didn't tell us clearly about the next week's homework, but he got very angry when we were confused about homework"

"When we didn't understand what teachers mean, they sometimes got angry or disappointed."

Additionally, students noted the importance of the teacher being aware of their verbal and non-verbal communication. The data shows that some teachers appear unfriendly or serious and expressed their negative emotions in the class. Students indicated that it was important for the teachers to be aware of their facial expressions and to be more conscious of the negative emotions they express in the class. It seems that students frequently interpreted this as anger. The quotations below explain this in more detail:

"Sometimes teachers look very serious and unkind. Please speak kindly to me. This will help me to speak in your class"

"If teachers smile and speak kindly, I am more relaxed and motivated in the class"

"Keep positive. Many Japanese students are shy, so they look passive. But, in fact, they hope to be good English speakers"

"Japanese students are often too shy to speak to native speakers, so teachers ought to talk to students not so seriously before get to know each other deeply"

This finding is supported by Cutrone (2009) who states, "Teachers showing a negative or disappointed reaction to learners' behavior can also cause language anxiety" (p. 58). Shimizu (2000) further supports this finding and states that teacher's demeanor and attitude has been found to be a significant factor influencing Japanese learners' attitudes. Furthermore, the data reveals that in addition to the teachers being aware of their own demeanor, they should also be more aware of students' body language. The next segment will demonstrate this notion.

Students' Non-verbal Communication

Interestingly, students also highlighted the importance of the teacher being able to read the room. Students noted that if there is silence after an instruction, this generally denotes confusion. Students encouraged teachers to look for non-verbal cues rather than to prompt for verbal responses. This finding suggests a cross-cultural difference between teacher and students, especially in a Japanese university context. The following quotes illustrate this in more detail:

"I would recommend teachers to pay closer attention to the students' non-verbal expressions because the students don't say anything when they are in trouble or confused..."

"I recommend that teachers pay attention to what students look like when they [teachers] are communicating"

"They [teachers] should ask themselves, do my students look happy?"

"I recommend a native teacher to join a regular class as a student with Japanese students to understand the ordinal atmosphere in classes."

In Japanese culture, passivity, quietness and obedience are regarded as good traits for a student to have (Nozaki, 1993). Furthermore, unlike Western classrooms, "the teaching style in Japan is teacher-fronted, and minimal input is sought from students" (Cutrone, 2009, pg. 58). Therefore, native teachers should understand that students have been socialized in Japan and should seek different ways to engage them. Although students rely on non-verbal communication, they also desire to actively participate in class, the following reveals this tension in more detail.

Interactive Class

The data shows that students place a high regard on interactive classes. It is clear that students want to have opportunities to speak in class either with their peers or with the teacher. However, students noted that teachers often "preach" or deliver long monologues which prevented them from interacting in the class. In other words, students seemed to prefer student-centered teaching styles compared to teacher-centered teaching styles. In the focus group, it was noted that students often feel tension between wanting to speak and feeling shy to speak in class. The quotations below illustrate students' desire to have more speaking time in class:

"In Japan, students can hardly get opportunities to speak English. So, I would like to recommend native English teachers to help their students practice to speak English without any scripts"

"I would like chances to speak, so I think it'll be great if students can talk in groups about a particular topic for at least ten minutes in every class"

“Let students talk more with their peers on daily, common topics like natives do in their countries”

“I want them [teachers] to have more mutual communication with us”

In addition to more interactive classes, students expressed a need for teachers to be more considerate regarding the time assigned for homework tasks.

Time Consciousness

The focus group data elucidates that some Japanese students feel that native English teachers do not understand the academic pressure under which they must operate. Students felt that some teachers give little thought to the amount of time that is needed to complete homework and assignments. In fact, some students felt that certain homework assignments were just busywork without clear goals. Students explained that homework instructions need to be clearer and supported this with examples of them feeling like they have wasted a lot of time trying to understand the instructions. Students noted that they have limited time to sleep given the amount of university course work that they have to complete. Consequently, students felt that the quality of the work that they can produce suffered significantly. It was also noted that time constraints added to their anxiety levels in the English class:

“They have no idea that Japanese students have so much homework that we have no time to do English assignments”

“I want them [teachers] to give the right amount of useful homework, with clear explanation and examples”

“The homework that Japanese students do is very different from what English natives are used to. It would be really helpful if the teacher would show us how to do the homework”

In addition to time consciousness, students noted that teachers should develop cross-cultural competencies in order to better understand students and classroom situations. The following illustrates this more clearly.

Cross-Cultural Competence

In the questionnaire, students stressed the importance of “consideration”. Upon further investigation, the focus group data concluded that “consideration” meant that teachers need to understand the difference between Japanese and Western students and adjust their teaching style accordingly. For example, teachers should not only ask students if they have any questions at the end of the class but also to encourage students to contact them after class via email. Students explained that they prefer contacting the teacher after class in a non-confrontational manner. Students also expressed that teachers need to make an effort not to embarrass them by singling them out in class. This denotes the differences between the collective culture in Japan and individual Western cultures. Teachers need to negotiate their individualistic Western style teaching techniques in the context of a collectivistic culture. The following quotes demonstrate this:

“I want English teachers to be interested in Japanese culture. If the teachers know about it, even if they know just a little bit, Japanese students feel happy and they will be acquainted with the teachers”

“I want teachers to know how Japanese students think things”

“I recommend them [teachers] to know the different way of thinking because sometimes it confuses us”

“They should learn Japanese culture for example, Japanese students are not willing to speak in front of the class”

“Living in the surroundings you have no choice but to speak Japanese, please learn some Japanese”

“We have a saying that “silence is golden”. We are not good at raising hands or being showy, but we can live in Japanese society. Please understand this”

According to Cutrone (2009) some teachers may have ethnocentric ideas about how students should behave in the classroom. Teachers need to be respectful and accommodating of cultural differences. In addition, the “apparent aloofness, avoidance, and introversion in learners’ behavior may be due to anxiety” (Cutrone, 2009, p. 59). If teachers react negatively to these cultural differences, they may intensify students’ anxiety (Cutrone, 2009). Further questions developed by students were categorized as ‘other’. Some of these questions centered around interesting lesson content and clear lesson goals. The next section will introduce the reflective tool.

Co-Development of the Reflective Tool

The students who participated in the focus group co-designed a *Reflection Tool for Native English Speaking Teachers in Japanese Universities* (See Appendix 3). The focus group participants decided that teachers should review these questions regularly to enhance their self-awareness and cognizance of potential issues in the class. The reflective questions are designed to be used alongside a diary in which teachers can record more detail and work out strategies for the next class.

CONCLUSION

This article suggests that traditional reflective practice needs to evolve to move beyond excessive introspection and move towards a more inclusive and cross-cultural paradigm. It is not efficient for teachers in a cross-cultural context to use Western style introspective reflection techniques only. Such isolated reflective practices silences student voices and inhibits teachers from identifying cross-cultural blind spots.

Traditional reflective practice models are highly Westernized and not culturally sensitive. However, native English teachers can improve their teaching through culturally appropriate and context specific reflection techniques. This study offers a fresh approach to teachers’ reflective practices in Japanese University contexts. A reflective tool for native

English teachers in Japanese Universities was developed in collaboration with EFL Japanese University Students. This study found that Japanese students place a high regard on positive teacher demeanor, interactive classes, awareness of non-verbal communication, time consciousness and cross-cultural awareness in the classroom.

It must be noted that the reflective questionnaire was developed in collaboration with students as a personal reflective tool for teachers and was not designed to be used as a measurement tool or a performance evaluation tool. Further research should investigate how the Reflection Tool can be refined and tested. The student participants expressed an interest in creating a student feedback form which teachers can give their class in order to get feedback based on the same set of questions. Additionally, further research could investigate the link between ambiguous instructions, student confusion and teachers' expressed emotions (perceived as anger) in more detail.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire: My Advice for Native EFL Teachers in Japan

This survey is voluntary and completely confidential. Please be honest, your answers will not affect your grades in any way.

Gender: Female Male Gender Diverse

Ethnicity: Japanese Other _____

Age: _____

My English Level: Beginner Intermediate Upper Intermediate Advanced

Please answer the following questions:

1. What questions do you think native English teachers should ask themselves to reflect on their teaching to become better English teachers in Japan? (You can list more than 1 question.)

2. What would you recommend native English teachers in Japan to do or learn, to be better language teachers to students in Japanese universities?

Thank you for participating!

Appendix 2: Focus Group

Help Create a Reflective Tool for Native EFL Teachers in Japanese Universities

Your participation in this focus group is voluntary and completely confidential. Please be honest, your answers will not affect your grades in any way.

Focus Group: Demographic Data

Gender: Female Male Gender Diverse

Ethnicity: Japanese Other _____

Age: _____

Focus Group Interview Schedule:

Hi students!

Please have a look at the list of questions provided. These questions were created by the students who participated in the questionnaire (including you!).

In groups, please discuss the following:

- What general themes can you identify in these questions? In other words, what topics are the questions about?
- What questions are not listed here that should be listed in your opinion?
- What questions are not relevant?
- Do you have any suggestions as to how teachers should engage with these questions?

Please write the group's ideas on the note paper provided. This will be collected at the end of the discussion.

Thank you!

Appendix 3: Reflective Questions Created by Japanese Students for Native English Teachers

Instructions: Please use this survey as a reflective tool to assess your personal teaching approach with EFL Students at Japanese Universities. Please note that this is a personal reflective tool and should not be used as a performance evaluation tool. This tool is specific to teaching EFL Japanese university students.

Reflective Questions Created by Japanese Students for Native English Teachers						
Category	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teacher's Demeanor and Non-verbal Communication	1. The students body language looks happy and relaxed					
	2. I smile and my body language is friendly and approachable (I don't show disappointment and negativity)					
	3. I am respectful to my students, my tone is supportive and non-patronizing					
Clear Instructions	4. Everyone understands the instructions I give					
	5. The goals of the class are clear to students					
	6. I provide enough support and specific examples					
Awareness of Students' Time	7. I give students enough time to finish their tasks in class					
	8. I am aware of how much time students have for homework each week					
	9. I give the right amount of relevant/ useful homework					
Interactive Classes	10. I provide enough opportunities for students to talk and share their opinions					
	11. I speak clearly and use the right speed and vocabulary with the class					
	12. I make an effort to personally speak to students					
	13. My class is interactive					
Consideration and Cross-Cultural Competence	14. I listen patiently to students as they express themselves in English					
	15. I praise my students' achievements					
	16. I welcome students to ask me questions after class and provide opportunities for them to email/ message me					
	17. I make an effort to reduce students' anxiety and embarrassment in my class					
	18. I adjust to my student's needs, knowing that that Japanese students and Western students are different					
	19. I make sure to include everyone in class regardless of religion, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or socio-economic status					
Action Plan	20. The class is interesting and meaningful to students					
	What do I currently do well as a teacher? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>					
What aspects can I improve on in future and how will I do this? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>						

Talk Corpus: A Web-based Corpus of TED Talks for English Language Teachers and Learners

Paul Raine⁹

Keio University

ABSTRACT

Many language teachers are already familiar with TED Talks (www.ted.com); a wide range of freely available video presentations given by expert speakers on a variety of topics. However, it is not a simple task to find a TED Talk of an appropriate speed or linguistic level for English language learners of a certain level, or to develop supplementary data, such as word lists, which are necessary to assist in the teaching of the language used in the talks. This paper introduces *Talk Corpus* (www.apps4efl.com/tools/talk_corpus/), a web-based corpus developed by the author, which helps to solve some of these problems. *Talk Corpus* is comprised of 2,051 TED Talk videos, related meta-data, and supplementary linguistic data. The functionality of the tool is described, and a justification and explanation of how the tool and its data are applicable to the practice of English language learning and teaching is offered.

INTRODUCTION

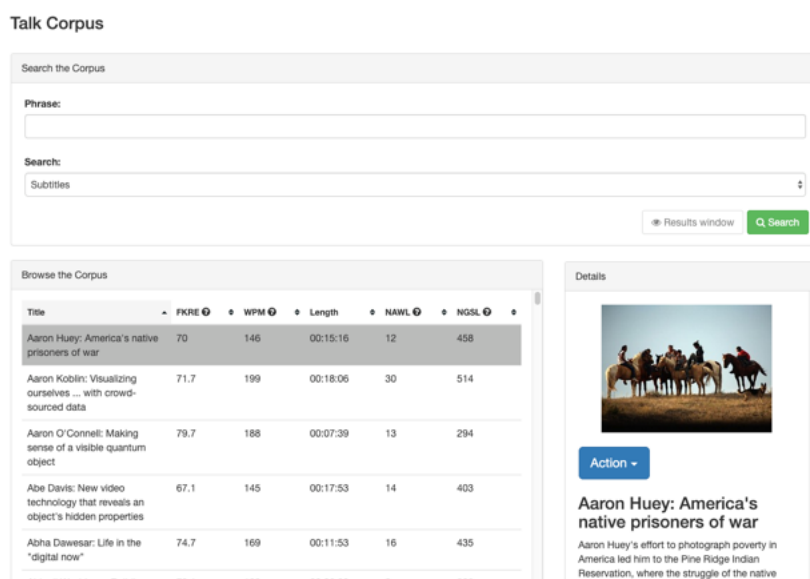
This paper will introduce *Talk Corpus* (https://www.apps4efl.com/tools/talk_corpus/), a web-based corpus developed by the author, which is comprised of 2,051 TED Talk videos and related meta-data, including tags, descriptions, and subtitles. In addition to the meta-data provided by TED, *Talk Corpus* also includes a range of supplementary data which makes the corpus more useful for language teaching and learning purposes. This data allows users to rank TED Talks by metrics such as the number of academic vocabulary items appearing in the talks, the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease (FKRE) score of the talks, and the speed of the talks in words per minute (WPM). These metrics can help teachers to easily find talks of an appropriate length, speed, and linguistic level for their students, as well as save teachers valuable time which would otherwise be spent on developing word lists and other supplementary data for the talks.

⁹ Paul Raine (BA, LLB, MA) has taught EFL in Japan since 2006, and lectures at three universities in the Tokyo area. He is particularly interested in Computer Assisted Language Learning. Correspondence should be sent to: paul.raine@gmail.com

TED TALKS AND THE TALK CORPUS

TED Talks are freely available English-language video presentations which are subtitled in a variety of languages. They cover a diverse variety of topics, which far surpass TED’s original remit of “technology, education and design”. TED Talks are provided under a Creative Commons license, which allows anyone to “reproduce, distribute, display or perform publicly the TED Talks” (TED Conferences, LLC, 2018), making them suitable for use in educational settings. The *Talk Corpus* tool (www.apps4efl.com/tools/talk_corpus) provides a free and intuitive web-based interface to 2,051 TED Talks. It allows users to search and interact with the TED Talk data in a variety of ways. *Figure 1* (below) shows the main interface page.

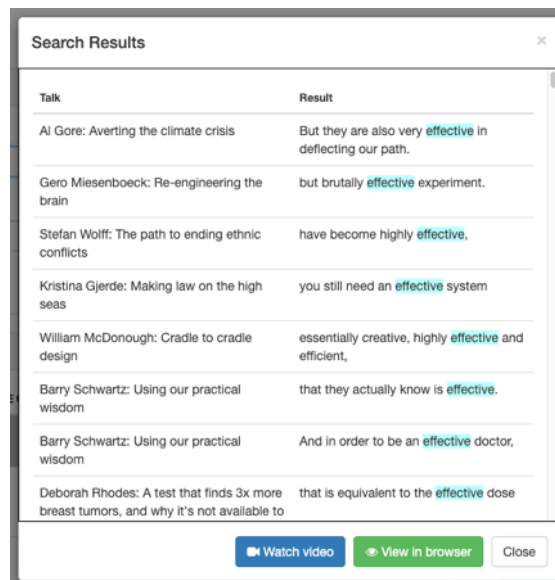
FIGURE 1
The main interface to Talk Corpus



Search

One of the main features of *Talk Corpus* is the ability to search TED Talk metadata, including tags, titles, descriptions, and subtitles. When searching subtitles, concordance lines are displayed for specific keywords, and the tool allows the user to jump immediately to the part of the video where the specified keyword is spoken. *Figure 2* (below) shows concordance lines for “effective” on a search of TED Talk subtitles.

FIGURE 2
Concordance lines for “effective” in Talk Corpus

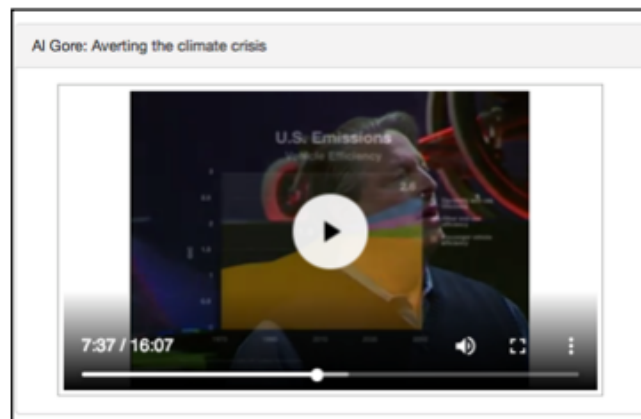


The screenshot shows a 'Search Results' window with a table of concordance lines. The word 'effective' is highlighted in blue in each result. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Watch video', 'View in browser', and 'Close'.

Talk	Result
Al Gore: Averting the climate crisis	But they are also very effective in deflecting our path.
Gero Miesenboeck: Re-engineering the brain	but brutally effective experiment.
Stefan Wolff: The path to ending ethnic conflicts	have become highly effective .
Kristina Gjerde: Making law on the high seas	you still need an effective system
William McDonough: Cradle to cradle design	essentially creative, highly effective and efficient,
Barry Schwartz: Using our practical wisdom	that they actually know is effective .
Barry Schwartz: Using our practical wisdom	And in order to be an effective doctor,
Deborah Rhodes: A test that finds 3x more breast tumors, and why it's not available to	that is equivalent to the effective dose

Talk Corpus users can select a concordance line and then click *Watch Video* in order to jump to the part of the video where the specified line is spoken. In *Figure 3* (below) the Al Gore TED Talk titled “Averting the climate crisis” is shown at the 7:37 timecode where the concordance line “But they are also very effective in deflecting our path” is spoken.

FIGURE 3
The Al Gore TED talk “Averting the climate crisis” at the 7:37 timecode



One convenient feature of *Talk Corpus* is a functionality that allows users to jump directly to the part of the video where the search term is used. This provides an easy way to locate examples of key words in context (KWIC). Teachers can then expose their students to multiple examples of the target words in context and draw students’ attention toward collocational relationships (Thurstan & Candlin, 1998), which are vital for developing the ability to use language in a natural way (Hoey, 2012).

Vocabulary

Talk Corpus also provides a vocabulary list for each of the TED talks in its database. The list includes vocabulary appearing in the New General Service List (Browne, Colligan, & Phillips, 2013a) and the New Academic Word List (Browne, Colligan, & Phillips, 2013b). Words not appearing on either of these two lists are marked “offlist”. *Figure 4* (below) shows part of the word list for the Al Gore TED talk “Averting the climate crisis”. The first column is the word, the second column is the number of times the word appears in the talk, and the third column is the name of the list the word appears in, or “offlist” if the word does not appear in either list.

FIGURE 4
Vocabulary list for the Al Gore TED talk “Averting the climate crisis”

dioxide	2	NAWL
director	2	NGSL
down	2	NGSL
effect	2	NGSL
electricity	2	NGSL
end-use	2	OFFLIST
energy	2	NGSL
exit	2	NAWL
extremely	2	NGSL
find	2	NGSL
green	2	NGSL
group	2	NGSL
harsh	2	OFFLIST

Teachers can use these convenient word lists to pre-teach some of the vocabulary items which appear in the talks in order for them to be sufficiently comprehensible for language learners (Qiang, Hai, & Wolff, 2007). Another way to use these word lists would be to help locate TED Talks that consist mostly or entirely of words that are already known by their students, with a range of 95-98% of words being “known” a necessary pre-requisite for comprehension (Webb, 2010).

N-grams

In addition to vocabulary, *Talk Corpus* also provide n-gram information for each TED Talk in its database. This allows researchers, teachers, and learners to easily see which multi-word lexical items are common in any given TED Talk. *Figure 5* (below) shows 5-grams (n-grams with 5 discrete elements) for the Al Gore TED Talk “Averting the climate crisis”. It is important for learners to have an understanding of multiword lexical items. This is because formulaic language is ubiquitous in language use, and offers processing advantages and boosts in fluency to learners (Martinez & Schmitt, 2012).

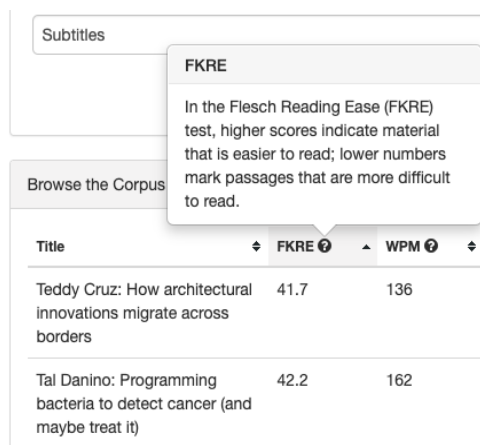
FIGURE 5
A list of 5-grams for Al Gore TED talk “Averting the climate crisis”

N-gram	Count
FORMER VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE	2
THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT	2
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE	2
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	2
EVERY TIME I GIVE IT	2
THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE	2
OF YOU WHO ARE GOOD	2
YOU WHO ARE GOOD AT	2
WHO ARE GOOD AT BRANDING	2

Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease scores

Flesch Reading Ease (FKRE) scores are provided for each of the talks in the *Talk Corpus* database, with higher scores denoting material that is easier to read, and lower scores denoting more difficult material. Although originally developed for the grading of texts meant for native speakers, such as government publications and children’s books (Flesch, 1948), FKRE has also been shown to be a valid and useful measure for learners of English as a foreign language (Greenfield, 2004). The elements of the FKRE, such as number of syllables per word and number of words per sentence have also been shown to closely coincide with similar formula for “listenability” (Fang, 1966), i.e. how easy it is for learners to process language aurally. The FKRE is therefore a useful metric by which to rank the relative difficulty of talks in the *Talk Corpus* database, which can be done easily from the main page of the tool, as shown in *Figure 6* (below).

FIGURE 6
Talk Corpus TED Talks ranked by Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease scores, from low to high words per minute



Another useful metric provided by *Talk Corpus* that is not covered by the FKRE is the number of words per minute for each TED Talk in the corpus. This was calculated by dividing the number of words in each transcript by the length of each video. Speed of speech is one of the main factors affecting listening comprehension (Boyle, 1984; Tauroza & Allison, 1990), and it is therefore a useful metric by which to be able to rank TED Talks, and to aid teachers in selecting level-appropriate videos for their particular learners. For academic lectures, the average speaking speed is approximately 140 words per minute, and the TED Talks in the *Talk Corpus* database range from 53 to 275 words per minute, providing a good range of speeds for most levels of learners.

CONCLUSION

The *Talk Corpus* is a useful tool for both corpus linguists studying academic English usage, and teachers and learners of English wishing to use corpus-based and data-driven techniques. The tool is provided via an intuitive web-based interface, and is open and free to use without registration or restriction. The creative commons license under which TED Talks have been made available allows teachers to freely use *Talk Corpus*, its database of TED Talks, meta-data, and supplementary data in a range of different contexts and without worrying about copyright restrictions. *Talk Corpus* saves teachers time that would otherwise be spent trying to locate an appropriate level of TED Talk, or trying to create supplementary data necessary for the teaching of vocabulary or multi-word phrases appearing in talks. It also allows teachers and learners of English to quickly locate examples of KWIC, and helps to promote learners' awareness of collocational relationships, which are necessary for developing the ability to use language naturally.

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