

## Foreword

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ETJ (English Teachers in Japan) is a free association that encourages the exchange of information and teaching ideas, provides opportunities for training and professional development, and brings teachers together into a community.

The annual season of ETJ Expos is one way that ETJ promotes these values. Every year an ETJ Expo is held in each of the following areas: Chubu, Kansai, Kyushu, Tohoku, and Tokyo. Each Expo consists of displays and forty-five-minute presentations. The presentations fall into two categories, non-commercial ones by local teachers, and commercial presentations by representatives of organisations that have displays.

This special issue of *Accents Asia* is a by-product of the 2018/19-season ETJ Tokyo ELT Expo and Book Fair, which was held on 22nd and 23rd February, 2019 at Otsuma Women's University, Chiyoda Campus, Tokyo. It represents a new aspect of the ETJ Tokyo Expo, whereby local teachers who gave non-commercial presentations were invited to write up their content as a paper, and submit it for publication. The requirements for presentations were that the content should be about language teaching or learning, and that they should not promote a product or service for profit or gain. This meant the potential scope of papers was quite wide, and the organisers anticipated articles ranging from the results of empirical studies to descriptions of favourite lesson plans.

As editor for this special edition, I am very pleased to introduce the following papers by Wendy Davis, Ken Ikeda, Nathan Krug, Robert Rowland, and Jennifer Yphantides.

### **Wendy Davis: Fostering a Positive Learning Environment through Ideal Classmates**

Wendy, a graduate from the M.S.Ed. TESOL Program of Temple University, Japan, reports on her action research project in which she investigated the 'Ideal Classmates' procedure at the junior high school level. This project draws on theory and research by respected authorities, while replicating a study in which the subjects were university students. It confirms the findings of the earlier study, that by facilitating students sharing ideas on how they can learn better and more enjoyably, teachers can foster a more supportive and positive learning environment for their students.

### **Ken Ikeda: Encouraging Students to Express Meaningful Opinions Based on Their Values**

Ken is an Associate Professor of English Education at Otsuma Women's University. In this paper he outlines a framework which teachers can use to facilitate students' building and developing values-based opinions. Following Ken's step-by-step guide results in groups of students constructing 'manifestoes' which they can use for in-class discussions.

### **Nathan Krug: Moments of Second-Language Conversation outside of the Formal Language Classroom**

Nathan is an Associate Professor at Saitama University. His paper uses Conversation Analysis (CA) techniques to analyse how Japanese EFL learners navigate new language in a 'conversation-for-learning' context. Nathan also provides an outline of CA, a description of conversation-for-learning, and a discussion of some representative studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Terry Yearley has been teaching EFL in the Kanto area since 2001. He has taught all ages and levels, and currently teaches at two universities and an exam preparation school. He has been a member of ETJ since 2003, and has held several positions as a local group officer.

**Robert Rowland: A Course to Foster Literature Appreciation in EFL Students**

Robert's paper outlines the poetry course that he developed for his students at Seigakuin University where he is an Assistant Professor. Robert discusses arguments for and against poetry for content-based language classes. He also includes details of an Exit Survey which indicates that the course was effective both in promoting student understanding of literature, and in providing motivation to study in the future.

**Jennifer Yphantides: Perspectives, and Practitioner Support: A Literature Review**

Jennifer, a lecturer at Soka University, presents a literature review that examines the factors concerning Bilingual Education (BE) in autistic children. Although more research is needed, one important point Jennifer notes is that BE may actually be beneficial to autistics, rather than cause additional difficulty.

If you are interested in finding out more about ETJ, please visit the ETJ website (<https://ltprofessionals.com/etj>). Details of upcoming ETJ Expos and workshops are also listed on ELT Calendar (<http://www.eltcalendar.com/events>).

I would like to thank the following: Wendy, Ken, Nathan, Rob, and Jennifer for their efforts as peer-editors as well as for the papers they contributed. David Paul, founder and organiser of ETJ, and Chris Carl Hale, founder and editor of Accents Asia for providing us with this opportunity for publication.

## **Fostering a Positive Learning Environment through Ideal Classmates**

**Wendy Davis<sup>2</sup>**  
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### **ABSTRACT**

This action research study reports on the reciprocal changes in behavior with junior high school students when asked to share their ideas on what kind of classmates they could learn English Conversation well with. Students were asked to “*Please describe a group of classmates that you could learn English Conversation well with. What would you all do to help each other learn better and more enjoyably?*” Classes’ responses were looped back to raise students’ awareness of their classmates’ needs. For the second and third treatment, the responses from the first treatment were coded and the top 16 descriptors were noted. Students rated the descriptors based on three factors: (a) this is important, (b) my classmates are doing this, and (c) I am doing this. Students were asked to reflect on any behavioral changes they had made throughout the semester. Quantitative and qualitative results showed that students modified their behavior reciprocally and recognized the importance of their mutual needs. Students’ self-reported changes in behavior were found to go beyond the learning of English Conversation. Some notable reflections were, “*I started to think I could do this before thinking I couldn’t*” and “*I started to mimic the good parts of others.*”

### **INTRODUCTION**

This action research study, the first of its kind at the junior high school level in Japan, was modeled after studies done by Murphey, Falout, Fukuda, and Fukada (2014) and Fukada, Fukuda, Falout, and Murphey (2017). Inspired by their positive outcomes, this study aimed to garner similar results.

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Positive results have been found in research based on possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and L2 motivational self system (Dornyei, 2009). Both have focused on the individual and the power of self motivation. Murphey, Falout, Fukuda, and Fukada proposed “imagining something different: possible proximal classmates behaving positively toward the self in the present” (2014, p. 242) and flipped possible selves into possible others. Murphey et al (2014) called this reciprocal idealizing, a process by which individual idealizations, once shared with others, “positively influence the motivations and behaviors of other classmates that interact with the self” (Murphey et al, 2014, p. 242). Murphey et al (2014) hypothesized that once learners imagine how they want others to support them, it would be easier to behave reciprocally to others’ needs.

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<sup>2</sup> Wendy Davis graduated from Temple University Japan with an M.S.Ed. in TESOL in June 2019. She has been living and teaching in Tokyo since 2001. Her ongoing action research using the Ideal Classmates treatment began in 2017 and is the first at the junior high school level in Japan. Correspondence should be sent to Wendy Davis: idealclassmates@gmail.com

The action research project (Murphey et al., 2014) on which this present study was modeled, was conducted with university students at four different universities in the Tokyo area over one semester. In the first phase, students were asked an open-ended question which students could answer in English or Japanese (Describe a group of classmates that you could learn English well with. What would you all do to help each other learn better and more enjoyably?) Once the responses (N=449) were collected, students were able to read a portion of the them. Half way through the semester, students were given the top 16 descriptors from the responses to the open-ended question and asked to evaluate each with respect to three aspects: (a) This is important for successful learning, (b) My classmates have done this so far this semester, and (c) I have done this so far this semester. Rating these three aspects on a 6-point Likert scale, the researchers sought to quantify the level of students' perception of the value each aspect on their learning, and how much they and their classmates were doing these things. The findings were that the perceived importance of the 16 descriptors was high (M=5.07), and both the perception of classmates' behaviors (M=4.09) and perception of their own behavior (M=4.02) were moderate. The study also found a medium correlation between students' rating of the importance of the descriptors and their own behavior (0.485), a large correlation between the importance of the descriptors and their classmates' behavior (0.582), and an even larger correlation between the students' own behavior and their classmates' in relation to the descriptors (0.829). This reflected strong, reciprocally helpful behaviors for learning among classmates. The concluding statement from the study summarized the theoretical underpinnings of Ideal Classmates:

Findings suggest that pedagogical applications of possible selves theory would do well to include active participation of imaginings within a lived experience, proximal peers and environments, past and present self guides, and possible others (Murphey et al., 2014, p. 242).

## **METHOD**

The treatments were administered by the researcher to all of her students. The translation and coding of the responses was done by a bilingual student from Sophia University, who was educated in both North America and Japan, and was a former student at the junior high school where the action research was conducted.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were 482 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year (J1-J3) students at a private girls' junior high school in Tokyo. Students attend English Conversation class once a week for 50 minutes. Students worked in teams of the same 4-5 students every week. There were 20 students in each class on average with a total of 24 classes (8 classes per grade).

### **Procedures**

Three treatments were administered over the school year. The first was at the start of the school year. The second was at the end of the first semester (approximately three months later). The third was at the end of the school year (approximately 10 months after the first treatment).

#### ***Treatment one: pre survey with Ideal Classmates prompt***

At the start of the first day of class, students were asked to answer a prompt which was given in both English (Describe a group of classmates that you could learn English Conversation well with. What would you all do to help each other learn better and more enjoyably?) and Japanese

(一緒に親しく英会話を学ぶクラスメートのグループがどのようなものを想像して書いてみてください。より上手に楽しく助け合って学ぶにはどうすればいいでしょうか。).

Students answered in Japanese (N=481) or English (N=1) and were instructed not to write their name in order to keep all the responses anonymous. Responses were collected for each class, photocopied, and the responses were looped back to each class respectively the following week. First, students were asked to quietly read all the responses (on average 20 per class). Then, students were asked to discuss the responses in small groups and talk about how they could actualize the ideas their classmates wrote.

### ***Treatment two: post survey***

Before the end of the first semester, each of the 482 responses were read, and the top 16 descriptors were coded and translated into English (see Appendix 1). Students were asked to rate their level of agreement (Likert scale 1-6; 1 = not at all; 6 = very much) on each of the 16 descriptors in three aspects: (a) this is important; (b) my classmates are doing this; and (c) I am doing this. Students were also asked to reflect on any behavioral changes they had made during the semester. These surveys were collected, mean scores were calculated, and correlations were calculated between the three aspects.

### ***Treatment three: post-post survey***

On the last class of the school year, students were asked again to rate their level of agreement with each of the 16 descriptors and reflect on any behavioral changes they had made during the year. The students' reflections on their behavioral changes were coded and translated into English after treatment two and treatment three. These changes were recorded for qualitative purposes and were not shared with the students.

## **FINDINGS**

The data from the first semester and year-end surveys reflected three findings. The first finding was a high mean score across all three aspects (see Table 1). These findings reflect that students believe in the importance of the descriptors. These findings were in line with Murphey et al (2014) who overall found that students believed in the importance of the 16 descriptors (M = 5.07) and their perception of their classmates' behavior (M = 4.09) reflected above their perception of their own behavior (M = 4.02). The second finding was high self-reported changes in behavior among all three grades (see Table 2). At the end of the year, both J1 and J2 students reported changes in behavior increased from the end of the first semester, while the J3 students reported a higher response of no changes at the end of the year. The third finding was a strong correlation between students' perception of their classmates' behavior and their own (see Table 3). The results in the university research (Murphey et al., 2014) were more robust with the correlation between students' perception of their classmates' behavior and their own behavior being 0.829 whereas this study was 0.645.

**TABLE 1**  
**Mean Scores of All 16 Descriptors**

Grade	(a) This is important	(b) My classmates are doing this	(c) I am doing this
J1 (n=156)	5.60	4.90	4.75
J2 (n=161)	5.60	4.95	4.77
J3 (n=165)	5.44	4.61	4.40

**TABLE 2**  
**Self-Reported Changes in Behavior**

		End of semester July 2017		End of year February 2018	
J1	Reported changes in behavior	145	93%	146	94%
	Reported no changes in behavior	11	7%	10	6%
		N=156		N=156	
J2	Reported changes in behavior	144	89%	146	94%
	Reported no changes in behavior	17	11%	9	6%
		N=161		N=155	
J3	Reported changes in behavior	149	90%	135	84%
	Reported no changes in behavior	16	10%	26	16%
		N=165		N=161	

The qualitative findings from students self-reported changes in behavior reflect the positive outcome of the Ideal Classmates procedure (see Table 4). Students reported having a positive outlook on and interest in English. One recurrent response was, “I started to think I could do this before thinking I couldn’t.”

**TABLE 3**  
**Correlation Between All 3 Aspects**

(a) This is important	1.0		
(b) My classmates are doing this	.376	1.0	
(c) I am doing this	.390	.645	1.0
	(a) This is important	(b) My classmates are doing this	(c) I am doing this

**TABLE 4**  
**Most Reported Changes in Behavior**

1. My friends and I cooperated and taught each other.
2. I got to be friends with more people.
3. Studying English became more enjoyable for me.
4. I could talk with people who have different opinions.
5. I started to have a positive attitude toward English.
6. I understood English better and became more interested in it.
7. I could think about others more.

## CLASSROOM APPLICATION

There was one classroom activity to foster the ideas shared among the class; this was the creation of team vision boards (see Appendix 2). After reading their classmates' responses, students broke into teams of four to five students. Within their group, they were asked to discuss their team's goals, promises, and rules. Following the discussion, the members designed an A4 size paper and wrote down what they discussed. Many of the ideas shared among the class with the Ideal Classmates responses, were incorporated into the vision boards. Their vision board was displayed on their team's desk every class, so they were reminded weekly of the goals, promises, and rules they set. Having the vision boards displayed during class was a tool for the teacher to bring students back in line if they were not following their own rules or promises.

## CONCLUSION

When students shared ideas on how they could learn better and more enjoyably, students behaved in a reciprocal manner to each other and fostered a supportive and positive learning environment. Such an environment can be realized through the use of the Ideal Classmates treatment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1  
Post survey and post-post survey

Classmates 

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the following questions about your English conversation learning. Circle the level of your agreement with the statements. Your participation is voluntary and in no way will reflect upon your grades. This survey is for research purposes and your privacy will be protected.

説明:

以下の英会話学習に関する質問に答えて下さい。それぞれの文の内容に自分が当てはまる度合いを選んで丸をつけて下さい。この研究への参加は任意によるもので、成績に影響することは決してありません。このアンケート調査は研究のためのものであり、皆さんのプライバシー保護には細心の注意を払います。

		This is important. これは重要なことです。						My classmates are doing this. 私のクラスメートが これをしている。						I am doing this. 私はこれをしている。					
		全 く な い					非 常 に 多 い	全 く な い					非 常 に 多 い	全 く な い					非 常 に 多 い
		1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Help each other	助け合う	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Get actively involved	積極的に活動する	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Enjoy English	英語を楽しむ	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Listen to what the teacher is saying	先生の言うことを聞く	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Do your best	努力する	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Speak English a lot	たくさん英語を話す	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Do the important things first	メリハリをつける	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Give your opinion	意見を出し合う	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Try to teach friends	友達に教えられるようにする	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Get to know each other well	仲良くする	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Apply English to real life	英語を実際に活用する	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Think about others	他者のことを考える	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Don't be afraid to make mistakes	間違いを恐れない	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Smile when talking	笑顔で話す	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Talk with the teacher	先生と話す	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Don't laugh at others' mistakes	他者の間違いを責めない	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please describe any changes you have made during this semester in your behavior or attitudes toward your classmates. What influences do you think these changes may have had on your classmates, relationships in and out of class, and your English learning?

今学期中、クラスメートに対するあなたの振る舞いや態度に何らかの変化はありましたか。そうした変化があなたのクラスメート、教室内外でのクラスメートとの関係、そして、あなた自身の英語学習にどのような影響を及ぼしたと思いますか。(十分なスペースがない場合は、裏に書いてください。)

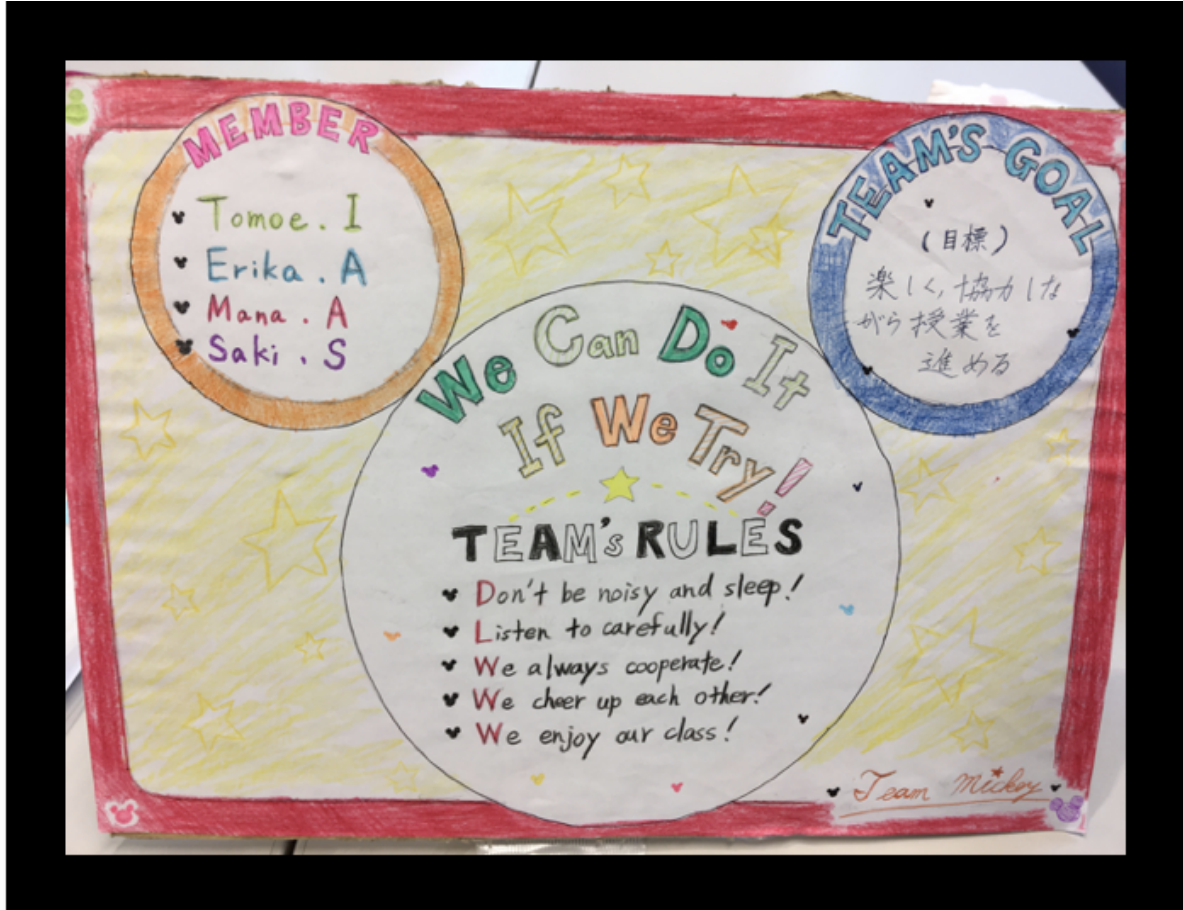
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このアンケートにお答えいただきありがとうございます!  
Thank you for taking part in this survey!

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Example of team vision board**



## **Encouraging Students to Express Meaningful Opinions Based on Their Values**

**Ken Ikeda<sup>3</sup>**

*Otsuma Women's University*

### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this instructional article is to put forth a teaching approach that enables students to express their honest opinions coherently. This outcome can be accomplished by having their views emerge from their core values and beliefs, which is encouraged in active learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 39). Students first respond to a list of value statements, creating their own statements as well. They interact with their classmates to find others who share the same degree of agreement or disagreement with particular statements. Students then form groups with like-minded members to construct manifestos with slogans and logos. These values-based manifestos can be applied easily to discussions and proposals. This paper closes with reflections on the feasibility of this instructional approach, focusing on building comfort and community.

### **INTRODUCTION**

How can we encourage students to utter meaningful opinions? This desired outcome comes through having them construct opinions based on their values grounded in personal value statements, which come from what they believe are important to their lives. From these value statements, students can express their beliefs and important ideas into organized manifestos. Through such constructions, students engage in community-building with others and express their opinions which are true to their own beliefs.

I have seen students develop their opinions using this approach at a variety of English proficiency levels. This approach has also been implemented in various classes from fifteen-week semesters to as few as three two-hour intensive sessions. Regardless of level or duration, I have witnessed how students become strongly and positively motivated to openly present their stances, even in public places such as restaurants.

This values-based opinion-building approach enables students to move from simply responding to prompts or eliciting what they think to speaking coherently, with awareness built on statements they fully understand and have thought through with purpose. Students should be encouraged to build their manifestos in a community with other students. While students may be nervous to share their most esteemed opinions with others, let alone in English, this manifesto-building approach enables them to convey their thoughts because they are established on their values.

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## **VALUES, MANIFESTOS, AND ACTIVE LEARNING**

Values represent our core beliefs and emotions. Lemke (2008) explicitly states that “values and ambitions ... are clearly grounded in fear and desire” (p. 27). Values are grounded in personal beliefs of how the world ought to be as well as rooted in feelings connected to fears and desires. Trainor (2008) states that if people become clearly aware of their values, “the easier it is to put them into practice. Values provide the framework for decision-making”. Clearly thought-out values easily can lead to the formation of manifestos or policies that advocate action.

I use “manifesto” to embody this instructional approach. The word “manifesto” is defined as “a written statement of beliefs, aims, and policies of an organization” (Cambridge Dictionary Online). The word “manifesto” entered the Japanese language in 2009 when the Social Democratic Party (*Minshuto*) used it to launch an encompassing set of political initiatives. Their campaign toppled the Liberal Democratic (*Jiyuminshuto*) government, and ‘manifesto’ became a part of popular Japanese vocabulary.

The word “manifesto” continues to have worldwide appeal. Brand-themed manifestos aimed at persuading would-be consumers, including those by Nike and Apple, are fashioned with apt descriptions of their organizations and purposes (Chi, 2019).

Having students construct manifestos based on their values fits very well with the teaching impetus known as active learning. Bonwell and Eison (1991) state that active learning is “anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (p. 19). They identify five characteristics of active learning occurring in classrooms: (a) doing more than listening; (b) developing their skills by themselves; (c) carrying out higher order thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation); (d) engaging in reading, discussing, writing activities; and (e) exploring their own attitudes and values.

The importance Bonwell and Eison (1991) accord to the fifth characteristic on students’ values can be seen throughout their treatise on active learning. They recommend that students complete self-assessment questionnaires as a stimulus for discussion. These authors regard such questionnaires as bases “for determining differences among students’ attitudes or values” (p. 39). Bonwell and Eison have prepared a survey for instructors to self-assess their own teaching practices on a regular basis, which includes the prompt to have students “complete ... a questionnaire about their beliefs, values, attitudes)” (p. 84). These statements by Bonwell and Elson that point to the importance of ascertaining student values, reinforce the worthiness of this value-based instructional approach.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE VALUES-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH**

### **Laying the Groundwork**

#### *Creating a Comfortable Atmosphere*

It is essential to create an encouraging atmosphere for students to feel comfortable to produce their opinions and ideas, no matter how trite or simple. The teacher should accept all views, however seemingly contrary or parochial. If learners express seemingly simple views, the instructor should ask them to provide their reasons, which will help them to actualize their beliefs.

#### *Providing a List of Values Statements*

I have adapted a list of value statements (See Appendix 1) from Morgan and Rinvoluceri (1988) that provide choices from complete agreement to complete disagreement on an eight-point rating scale. Teachers can provide their own value statements, which I recommend should 1) reflect current issues; 2) use simple English in order to avoid confusion; and 3) minimize jargon. In addition, a blank line should be added to each value statement to encourage students to write their own ideas, circling their own degree of agreement or disagreement. Students should be encouraged to provide reasons for their agreement or disagreement to these statements.

### ***Polling Responses***

At the next lesson, students share their lists with everyone in the class. Each student reads the value statements and their own ideas. They record each student's choice of agreement or disagreement to each statement, keeping a separate tally sheet of responses with each student's name. It is essential that as much time as possible is allowed for students to meet with their peers and get their responses. Through this intensive interaction, students can find out which of their classmates share the same degree of agreement or disagreement with individual statements. An extended time of interaction enables students to find surprising commonalities with those they would not normally interact.

### ***Creating Group Manifestos***

After polling responses, students review their results and compare them with their classmates' responses. This phase enables students to engage in higher-order thinking by analyzing and synthesizing their findings. They look for those students who have indicated the same degree of agreement or disagreement on two or more value statements. Requiring students to find others who agree on two or more statements helps to ensure that a group will have few members.

When the students have formed small groups based on their shared values, they complete a planning sheet (Appendix 2). This sheet consists of the following elements: (a) group name, (b) motto or slogan, (c) logo, and (d) two or three value statements on which they agree or disagree with supporting reasons. This last element comprises the group platform. Students use their creative thinking to manufacture and hone these elements. This is an exciting and productive period for students to package their group manifestos. Through discussion, they come to realize the importance of considering how to craft their group name. It has been my observation that these group names are often composed of their initials or keywords representing their core beliefs. Students looking at existing models (e.g., brand manifestos) and create their own concise and appealing slogans. They consider the importance of color and size to make their logos. They tailor their group name, logo, and slogan to match the statements in their platform.

Finally, students present their group manifestos to the class. For this purpose, teachers can make student group presenters aware of ethos (believability), logos (structure), and pathos (appeal). Students can be instructed about the judicious use of gestures, voice projection, and visual aids. They could create manifesto posters, following such designs as the Holstee Manifesto (n.d.) to succinctly summarize their platform of value statements. The teacher could empower students to vote on the best overall presentation, the most colorful logo, and other categories.

## **APPLICATIONS**

With these manifestos, students can readily tackle textbook topics or discussions to build and develop their opinions. For discussions or debates, students should be encouraged to apply their

manifestos to construct and or support their viewpoints. Should they find their manifesto stance on a topic is not compatible with their actual views, they can change their values platform to incorporate their new stances.

Proposals on issues advising change (or not) on a particular issue can be constructed quite easily from these group manifestos. Actually, many value statements are already in ‘proposal form’ as they involve the use of the modal ‘should’. Monroe’s motivated sequence (CFI, n.d.), provides a framework by which students can craft their manifesto into a proposal by focusing on the need, offering a solution to satisfy, and visualizing the solution. Student groups provide: 1) background of the proposal; 2) the proposal itself to challenge or support an idea; 3) description of the proposal features; 4) advantages or benefits; 5) anticipated objections or problems, closing with a final appeal for their proposal. Students can be encouraged to incorporate research studies or evidence as background and to inform their proposal. Instructors should tell students that they should aim to present their proposal using ethos, logos and/or pathos. Class referendums can be taken to decide on the best proposals.

## **FEASIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

Bringing this values-laden manifesto instructional approach into actualization can be very labor-intensive for both the teacher and students, especially in the initial stages. The instructor needs to maintain a strong vision, enthusiasm, and patience to allot enough time to allow students to talk to each other. This is especially true in the values statement polling period, which might require more than one lesson. Such time is needed to enable students to reach agreement and establish their manifestos together. Students best construct their opinions and positions when they have come to a mutual understanding based on an assured sense of camaraderie that minimizes their fear of failure. The priority placed on building comfort and taking time to ensure shared values is essential to community building for Japanese students.

Some instructors contend that it is impractical to spend much time on community-building, especially if they must abide by course syllabus requirements or cannot afford the limited time in a semester or lesson period. Others have argued it is better to challenge students to speak in response to a big question (Perrett, 2018) that will force them out of their comfort zone. I contend that pushing students into speaking in such ways, however, could cause reluctant ones to develop scarring memories or contrarian views. Time is needed for learners to become comfortable enough speaking with each other to overcome anxiety. Even those instructors teaching one-term courses can achieve a similar depth of rapport with their students if they invest the time.

No student should feel left behind or unable to participate. This is true for even those who have missed lessons and may not have participated in the value statement polling and/or manifesto group-building. These students can be active observers, who can either listen to the various manifesto group presentations and write their own opinions, or be voters or referees. Such students should be encouraged to ask each other, using the list of value statements, to find commonality and create their own manifesto group with their platform of values.

## **CONCLUSION**

Students should be informed that their manifestos are applicable beyond one course and can serve as a *raison d’etre* for future courses and their own life perspectives. These group manifestos are amendable and subject to pressures to be up-to-date and sensitized to the larger community. The

teacher would do well to inform students to be mindful of the axiom “There is a reason for everything” so that they can provide rationales for every change to their manifestos. Likewise, manifestos can be modified with new value statements in response to issues or units discussed or studied.

Bonwell and Eison (1991) encourage instructors to have their students actively probe their values. Ito (2017) suggests that active learning should be reworded as “proactive” learning, since this kind of learning enables students to be innovators who “make changes through actions” (p. 7). When students understand what their values and beliefs are, they are equipped with personal knowledge that effects their actions for change. This instructional approach to promote students’ active participation through manifestos serves to enable students to express their beliefs in a constructive fashion.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**APPENDIX 1**

**TABLE 1**  
**List of Value Statements: How Important are These to You?**

Value	How much do you agree with each statement? <i>Write your own, and show how much you agree.</i>	Agree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	Disagree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
<i>Manners</i>	Example: People who are rude on a train should pay a fine. Your own:	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
<i>Education</i>	Example: After high school, everyone should spend a ‘gap year’ volunteering or traveling. Your own:	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
<i>Crime</i>	Example: People under 20 years old who murder should go to jail. Your own:	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
<i>Careers</i>	Example: Some jobs, such as in construction and firefighting, should never be done by women. Your own:	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
<i>Environment</i>	Example: Japan must continue to have nuclear energy. Your own:	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
<i>Language</i>	Example: Children must learn Chinese or Korean language from 1 <sup>st</sup> grade in primary school. Your own:	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
<i>Politics</i>	Example: Students should sing the national anthem at school entrance and graduation ceremonies. Your own:	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
<i>Family</i>	Example: Children under 12 years old should not have a smartphone. Your own:	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
<i>Citizenship</i>	Example: People who do not have Japanese citizenship should not own property in Japan. Your own:	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8
<i>Health</i>	Example: Everyone should receive free health care. Your own:	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8

**APPENDIX 2**



**Your Group Manifesto Presentation  
(As Leader(s) or Representative(s) of Your Group)**

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Rationale for group name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Motto/Slogan: \_\_\_\_\_

Rationale for motto: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Logo: [draw on back or attach to your paper]

Rationale for logo: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List of Agreed Value Statement(s) – Your Platform

Value Statement 1 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why is this value important to your group? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Value Statement 2 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why is this value important to your group? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Value Statement 3 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why is this value important to your group? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Final appeal statement (conclusion) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Moments of Second-Language Conversation outside of the Formal Language Classroom**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Following the conventions of Conversation Analysis (CA), this paper explores instances of second-language communication outside of formal classroom walls. Out-of-class environments provide learners with a degree of freedom to engage in a wider range of interactional practices than typically possible in class. How, then, do the learners organize and manage such ordinary-like conversation? The focus of this paper is narrowed to how learners use a linguistically new or unfamiliar resource in ‘conversation-for-learning’ (Kasper, 2004), in one specific computer-mediated environment. This study examines the use of the linguistic resource of ‘spelling out’ an unfamiliar term, which is later *re-used* to generate more compact sequences of interaction. Additionally, this paper examines how a new vocabulary item, one that initially generated misunderstanding, is skillfully repaired and then immediately used with precision. The pedagogical value of conversation-for-learning is addressed, and the findings support the inclusion of out-of-class conversation activities in the wider language learning curriculum.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language teachers seek to provide their students with an abundance of opportunities for interaction with peers in the target language. This is typically achieved in the formal language classroom through carefully planned task-based activities, teacher-facilitated discussions, information gap activities, role plays, and so forth.

Other important settings are also available for interactive target-language practice, outside of the formal classroom. In these environments (just as in class), learners may interact not only with fellow second-language speakers but also with first-language speakers of the target language.

In terms of the kinds of environments available, there exist all manner of ‘semi-casual’ conversation rooms and lounges (in some institutions), student-led speaking societies or clubs, and lunch-time discussion groups. This paper will explore a computer-mediated environment—namely, chatting in pairs, through personal computers.

The purpose of this paper is to examine certain aspects of what transpires in ‘conversation-for-learning’ (Kasper, 2004). The focus is narrowed to how the learners experiment with new (or unfamiliar) language items, in conversation-for-learning in one specific computer-mediated environment. In addition, this paper will briefly discuss the pedagogical value of out-of-class conversation-for-learning.

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## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For readers that may be unfamiliar with Conversation Analysis (CA), this section provides an outline of the CA-based analytical approach taken in this paper, before providing a description of conversation-for-learning. Some representative studies done up to this point are then briefly discussed.

### Sketching out CA and repair

CA focuses on the procedural analysis of communicative encounters—the explication of the means by which participants organize and manage talk-in-interaction. It involves the systematic analysis of language as it is actually used in everyday, ‘natural’ situations—incorporating both verbal and non-verbal conduct. It is often very detailed in terms of both descriptive findings and transcriptions.

Pallotti (2007) stresses that CA takes an *emic* perspective. In other words, it focuses on participants’ contextualized perspectives and interpretations of behavior, events, and situations.

Repair in the CA sense refers to the ways that speakers deal with problems in communication. The term encompasses the means by which the participants (jointly) resolve difficulties or uncertainties relating to speaking, hearing, and/or understanding.

More information about this approach is available in well-known introductory texts, such as Hays (2007) or Liddicoat (2011).

### What is conversation-for-learning?

Conversation-for-learning may be described as a type of learner-centered interaction. Participation in it provides opportunities for language learners to experience something approaching ‘ordinary talk’ with peers, which is especially important in, for example, foreign language environments. Participants enhance fluency through target language practice.

Kasper and Kim (2015, p. 391) define the main attributes of conversation-for-learning, which may be summarized as:

1. Speakers gather on multiple occasions.
2. The purpose is to talk in the target language.
3. The pedagogical expectation is that repeated participation will result in second-language development.
4. There is no set agenda other than to ‘simply talk.’
5. The participants’ performance is not assessed.
6. The talk has no institutional consequences (in terms of being expected or required).
7. Turn-taking is locally managed by the participants themselves.

### What has been examined so far?

Compared to in-class activities, the study of language learning encounters that occur outside of formal classroom walls is a recent research interest, with much remaining to be explored. What students do and what they achieve in such environments requires investigation (Kasper & Kim, 2015).

In terms of conversation lounge environments, some studies have been conducted. Hauser (2005), for example, describes how a second-language speaker can treat other second-language speakers as a unified group, by making requests on their behalf. Hauser (2008) also describes the use of ‘serial questioning’ and ‘pivoting.’ Through serial questioning, a (more proficient) speaker aims to isolate and develop a topic that other participants can then expand upon and develop. Through pivoting, a (more proficient) speaker initiates a shift in the current participation

framework, distributing turns in a more symmetrical manner.

Kasper and Kim (2015) analyze examples of conversation-for-learning in conversation rooms. They outline some practices through which the participants achieve the local order of conversation room interaction, how the participants engage in second-language learning as a social activity, and how interaction in such environments over an extended period permits us to observe the actual development of interactional practices.

Focusing on turn-taking practices in an open conversation lounge environment, Otsu and Krug (2013) examine what interactional resources second-language speakers employ to organize turn-taking and achieve skillful interactions. They focus on how the learners allocate turns among themselves; that is, how they achieve the selection of other participants as the next speaker, and also how they successfully self-select.

In terms of mixed proficiency levels among conversation-for-learning participants, Kasper (2004) demonstrates how the interlocutors in her data orient to a variety of membership categories including target language expert and novice. Jung (2004) examines repair as a language learning practice and shows how second-language speakers learn new vocabulary in conversations with conversational partners, who are proficient target language speakers.

Mori and Hayashi (2006) analyze interactions between native and second-language speaking participants. They demonstrate how Olsher's (2004) 'embodied completion' is utilized to achieve mutual understanding, and that it provides opportunities for the presentation of refined linguistic expressions which capture the exact ideas originally expressed through gesture.

## **METHOD**

This section provides an overview of the participants (who they are and who is presented in this paper). The way that the data was gathered for this study, and the approach taken in analyzing it, is also briefly described.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study are all affiliated with one tertiary-level institution in Japan at the undergraduate level. They are all language students in their early 20s that are voluntarily seeking additional opportunities for language practice.

In terms of the corpus, a total of 38 volunteers have participated to date—including 19 Japanese students (Kanto n=13; Kyushu n=1; Tohoku n=4; Tokai n=1) and 19 international students (Australia n=4; England n=2; Germany n=4; South Korea n=1; Thailand n=2; USA n=6).

The present paper limits the data examined to just two pairs of students. Each pair includes a Japanese learner of English and a more proficient speaker of English (being, in this instance, a German speaker of English in the first pair, and a native speaker of English from the United States in the second pair).

### **Procedures**

Visiting students from abroad were paired with Japanese students that were likewise seeking opportunities for language practice and cultural exchange. Via networked computers, in a video-chat environment, each pair met and conversed in English for a period of 20 minutes or longer. Topic choice was not restricted—students were free to manage their own interactions independently and to arrange any future meetings for language practice by, and for, themselves.

Using commercially available software, the conversations were recorded. Then, following CA conventions, the data was transcribed.

Taking no pre-determined viewpoint, the transcribed data was examined though ‘un-motivated looking’ (Liddicoat, 2011; Psathas, 1995). In doing so, the author noticed that participants work through all kinds of communication troubles—and, interestingly for this paper, they do not shy away from taking risks to resolve those troubles, right at the point of occurrence (‘on the spot’ so to speak).

For the sake of brevity, the author narrowed the scope of possibilities to instances where the Japanese learners of English encountered something linguistically new or unfamiliar, and how the participants managed to resolve any misunderstanding at those moments. Three such moments are described in this paper, involving the two pairs of students mentioned above.

## **A note on the transcripts**

In line with CA conventions, this paper employs the use of a ‘monospaced typeface’ (i.e., Courier New in this case) for the transcription of data. A monospaced typeface has characters of equal width, allowing speakers’ utterances and their timing (including overlapped speech) to be represented as accurately as possible. This kind of typeface is preferable to a ‘proportional typeface,’ such as Times New Roman, where each character is variable in width, and hence is often impossible to align or arrange in specific or necessary ways.

To aid the reader in distinguishing transcribed data (i.e., speakers’ utterances) from the author’s analysis and discussion of the data, the use of the monospaced typeface for all transcript quotations will be maintained throughout the body of this paper.

Appendix 1 provides a brief explanation of common CA transcription conventions used herein.

Appendices 2, 3 and 4 contain the transcripts of data that will be analyzed in this paper (Extract 1, 2 and 3 respectively).

## **DISCUSSION**

This section considers three transcript extracts. The first two extracts, *Extract 1* and *Extract 2* (Appendices 2 and 3 respectively), involve the same pair of participants—a Japanese learner of English (as an additional language) and a German speaker of English (as an additional language). The third extract, *Extract 3* (Appendix 4), involves a different pair—a Japanese learner of English (as an additional language) and a native speaker of English from the United States.

### **Experiencing the strategy of ‘spelling out’**

In *Extract 1* (Appendix 2), two students are meeting each other for the first time, in the computer-mediated environment described above. Both participants are speakers of English as a foreign language. Based on the recorded interactional data (as evidenced in the transcript extracts shown in this paper), ‘Satoshi’ is a lower-level speaker of English, while ‘Robby’ is a much more proficient (high-level) speaker of English.

This extract demonstrates the enormous interactional work that often needs to be done in conversation-for-learning, prior to arriving at the first real topic of discussion—what has been termed the ‘anchor point’ with regards to telephone conversations (Schegloff, 1968, 1986, 2002; Wong, 2007; Wong & Waring, 2010). The anchor point is where, it could be argued, that *true* conversation-for-learning begins. At least in the participants’ minds it is most probably where they would envision beginning to talk—and hence beginning to ‘do’ language practice.

After initial greetings (lines 1 and 2), Robby requests a brief self-introduction by asking for Satoshi’s name at line 3. Satoshi provides his name (with a slight hesitation *ah*) in line 4.

Trouble-free (or unmarked) interaction would have followed a three-step process. First, the speaker would provide his name. Second, the recipient would repeat the name or display uptake/understanding of it in some way or other. Third, the speaker would confirm/accept that his name had been received correctly/appropriately in some way or other.

However, Robby (as recipient) cannot clearly catch the name. He utters in line 5 ah oh purlea- (tr. 'ahh oh please') which, in tone, and including the abrupt cut off, is indicative of a kind of baffled, or perhaps confused, state.

It is right here that Robby directly and overtly requests Satoshi to spell his name (so that he can better catch or comprehend it), by uttering ah oh purlea- can you spell it? in line 5. Interestingly for this study, it appears that this repair strategy is a very unfamiliar one (or at least an unpracticed one) for Satoshi. It could be possible that Satoshi is being asked to spell his name in English in an ordinary-like conversation for the first time.

Satoshi has a good deal of trouble with carrying out the spelling (repair) task. This is foreshadowed immediately by the 0.6-second pause (line 6) and the production of a candidate repetition of the verb 'spell' (sperl? in line 7). Robby reaffirms his request, and slightly rephrases it in line 8, adding a micropause and the increment [your] name, which is said in overlap with Satoshi's [ah: ] in line 9. Utterances such as 'oh' (in English) and 'ah' (in Japanese) are epistemic markers, signaling a 'change of knowledge state' (Heritage, 1984; Nishizaka, 2001). It appears here, then, that Satoshi is displaying that he has suddenly realized what he has been asked to do—that is, to spell out his name in English, letter by letter. This understanding is met with further delays (or hesitancy) by Satoshi in lines 10 (a 1.0-second silence) and 11 (a 'thinking' utterance e:ttō: as Satoshi begins to formulate his response).

From line 11, Satoshi does go on to spell his name, as requested. However, as evidenced all along the way from lines 11 to 41, this task is very difficult and/or problematic for Satoshi, and hence likewise also for Robby. The process does not go smoothly, with Robby requesting a full repetition of the spelling out task (in line 22) when he says oka::y (1.0) so: (.) plea-please I (.) again, (with a slight tone of exasperation).

In line 39, Robby does finally display understanding of his interlocutor's name, as it is repeated three times (although somewhat tentatively at first). Further, receipt of Satoshi's name by Robby is indicated again in lines 42 and 44, as Robby utters a::h okay, and also by I understand huh [huh fine ] (at the end of line 44).

In line 46, the process begins all over again—but in reverse—as Satoshi asks Robby for his name, in return. Again, the process is extremely prolonged—similar to what we have seen above—with both speakers finding it difficult to clearly spell out or catch what has been uttered. For the sake of brevity here in this study, the second round of spelling out of a participant's name has not been included in *Extract 1*.

### **Fluent re-use of 'spelling out'**

*Extract 2* (Appendix 3) occurs soon after that shown in *Extract 1* (Appendix 2). Having exchanged names through a lengthy process, Satoshi opens up the first topic of conversation-for-learning by asking about Robby's future job plans. The topic consumes 2 minutes of conversation time, as Robby's response was quite detailed, and required follow-up questioning by Satoshi. Then Satoshi moves on to enquire about Robby's country of origin.

It is at this moment at which *Extract 2* begins. Robby provides the required second pair part (to Satoshi's question of country of origin) when he says yeah .si yeah it's Germany (.) in line 164. Robby then momentarily takes over the enquiring role, flipping a question in a similar vein back to Satoshi by asking and u:m d'you live here in in Saitama:~? in line 165.

As it turns out, Satoshi's answer is not a completely straightforward one. To answer Robby's question completely, Satoshi must explain where he is actually from and also where he is living at

the time of this conversation-for-learning event. The short delay we see in line 166 is attributable to Satoshi formulating how he should reply, further evidenced by the brief hesitation *um* and his focus on his current situation as he responds *no::w:* I live in Saitama in line 167 (with emphasis on the beginning of the word ‘now’). Satoshi is quick to point out that his place of origin (or hometown) is actually in a different location, by adding (but) I'm from (.) *Fukuoka* in the latter part of line 167.

There is an immediately noticeable 0.4-second pause in line 168, which is followed by an (incorrectly) attempted repetition of the place name by Robby of *Fuko* in line 169. In line 170, Satoshi attempts to repair the hearing problem by reiterating the place name *Fukuoka* but with altered pronunciation (NB: compare the differing pronunciation of ‘Fukuoka’ by Satoshi in line 167 versus that of line 170). Satoshi’s altered emphasis not only highlights that what Robby has attempted to repeat was not sufficiently correct, but it also pinpoints the very vowel that was problematic, at least from Satoshi’s perspective.

Again, Robby makes an (incorrectly) attempted repetition of the place name, when he utters *Fuoka* in line 171. So, it is from now that Satoshi makes a determined effort to clear-up any confusion or mis-hearing or misunderstanding.

To do so, Satoshi clearly states his home city’s name once again, saying *Fukuoka* in line 172. Immediately following a micro pause, Satoshi moves straight into spelling out each letter of his hometown’s name, broken in to consonant and vowel pairs—corresponding to how a Japanese word is written using English letters. Satoshi does this without being prompted. He does so clearly and with a good degree of fluency, uttering *eff you (1.0) kay o::h (.) ah eff you ki- kay you o:h kay ay* in line 173.

There are two minor missteps as spelling out proceeds here that are worth noting. Importantly, however, Satoshi promptly self-corrects both. The vowel of the second consonant-vowel pair is uttered erroneously, but Satoshi immediately notices the error and pauses ever so briefly (as indicated by *kay o::h (.) ah* early in line 173), then he moves straight into restarting the spelling out process over again. On the second spelling attempt, Satoshi misspeaks in almost the same place. He immediately cuts off and self-corrects, uttering *ki- kay you* in the middle of line 173.

Having spelled out the name his hometown, Satoshi closes his spelling turn by reaffirming the pronunciation of his town’s name, uttering [*Fu ku (oka) ]* in line 174 (which happens to occur in overlap with Robby).

Robby makes apparent his comprehension and understanding of the place name by repeating it, uttering [*Fukuoka ah:::*] in line 175 (in overlap with Satoshi). Following a micro pause, Robby reaffirms his comprehension by uttering (.) *understand* at the end of line 175. This is accepted by Satoshi, who moves the conversation on by asking what, if anything, Robby has heard about his hometown in line 176. The two interlocutors then begin to converse about where this town is (from line 177, and continuing onward), before moving on to different topics.

Although there are short pauses between two of the consonant-vowel pairs, and despite the missteps or moments of misspeaking, the spelling out strategy that Satoshi employs in line 173 is achieved relatively smoothly and efficiently. It is unprompted—not being directly solicited by Robby here, as compared to what was observed in *Extract 1* above. Although the item being spelled out here is one syllable longer than the earlier example (compare ‘Fu-ku-o-ka’ here in *Extract 2* against ‘Sa-to-shi’ from *Extract 1*), the spelling out strategy is sequentially very compact at this time—extremely so when compared to the interactional work we examined in *Extract 1*, which, it must be remembered, shows merely half of the actual entire exchange of names transaction.

### Using unfamiliar vocabulary

In the final extract to be examined in this paper, *Extract 3* (Appendix 4), two recently-acquainted

participants are conversing in the same computer-mediated environment as described above. Again, based on the recorded interactional data (as evidenced in the transcript extract shown), ‘Aiko’ presents as an intermediate-level speaker of English, while ‘Steve’ is a native speaker of English.

Prior to the exchange shown in *Extract 3*, the two participants have been conversing for an extended period, covering assorted topics such as current part-time jobs and future plans. *Extract 3* begins at the point where Steve initiates a sequence, enquiring about Aiko’s schedule and her free time in the coming days. Steve is actually seeking to set up the next meeting—the next opportunity for the two participants to further practice conversation-for-learning. The actual decision of when to meet next is successfully and jointly made, however it occurs shortly after the interaction shown here in *Extract 3* and, hence, is not examined in this paper.

Steve asks Aiko about her free time, for the purpose of practicing conversation-for-learning again, by uttering *so when are your off days*, in line 359. The delayed response in line 360 indicates upcoming trouble, which is confirmed by Aiko’s repetition of the term *off day?* in line 361 with rising intonation (contrasting to Steve’s intonation of the same term in line 359).

Taking on a role somewhat like that of a language teacher, Steve makes an attempt to repair the problem by rephrasing his original utterance. He does so by replacing the term ‘off days’ entirely, saying *mmhmnn, from w- ur when do you not work*, in line 362. Notice too that the word ‘not’ is emphasized for clarity (for Aiko’s sake). However, this rephrasing is met again with a long silence in line 363, a delay and partial repetition *uuunnn::: when*, in line 364, an additional longer silence in line 365, and then a direct request for more information, which is in fact preceded by further delays and perturbations, as Aiko utters *(ah) sss-, (0.5) e- er- pardon?* in line 366.

Steve quickly accepts the request, with *[>Oh sorry ] no problem<* in line 368. Again in a teacher-like manner, Steve makes a second attempt to repair the problem by rephrasing his original utterance. After some re-starts and cutoffs, Steve initially tries to formulate a second rephrasing of his prior response, by uttering *I jur for example like I don’t work on ah::* in line 370. However, Steve abandons this attempt at rephrasing, and settles for modeling a candidate answer by uttering *I’m off on Monday and Thursdays*, in line 371. Again, notice too that the word ‘off’ is emphasized for clarity (for Aiko’s sake). The term has also been reduced simply to the adjective ‘off.’

Although interspersed with some short pauses (in lines 372, 374 and 377), Aiko does display her understanding (and that she is busy formulating her reply) as she utters *↑A::h huh↑huh*, in line 373 and *[ahhhh]* in line 376—the epistemic marker ‘ah’ (in Japanese) signaling a ‘change of knowledge state’ here (Heritage, 1984; Nishizaka, 2001).

By line 378 she is ready to begin to verbalize her reply more completely, uttering *hmn::: I’m off, (0.4) ↓em .ph Saturday, (0.6) and then <an> >ah!< (.) Thursday? [today? Nnn ]* in line 379. (Note that this conversation occurred on a Thursday, so what Aiko is indicating here by ‘today’ is that Thursdays are generally free from commitments for her.)

Steve shows his understanding, and he perhaps indicates that he favors the Thursday option, by uttering *Ah: [wr ] Thursdays*, in line 381, and *coo[l.* in line 383. Steve’s utterances here are acknowledged by Aiko’s *[Hnn, ]* in line 382 and *[Hm↑hm,* in line 384.

There are two interesting things to take from *Extract 3*. The first important point to note about this short extract is that over the course of lines 378 and 379, Aiko is precisely following the modelled example provided by Steve (in line 371)—albeit with hitches and perturbations.

The second important point to note about *Extract 3* is that Aiko was introduced to a new, or very unfamiliar, term (‘off days’). She questioned it twice in lines 361 and 366, and then used it appropriately in line 378 following the model provided by her interlocutor. In doing so, Aiko unambiguously provided the second pair part to Steve’s initial question about schedule availability (from line 359—the first pair part).



## CONCLUSION

This paper has provided a brief analysis of three examples of language learner interaction that occurred in one type of computer-mediated conversation-for-learning environment. The focus was on Japanese learners of English, at moments where they encounter or try out something new or unfamiliar in ordinary-like talk. It must be said that, even within the transcripts shown, there remains much more that could have been discussed.

We have seen that the conversation-for-learning participants, whether lower-level or higher-level speakers of the target language, successfully and co-jointly navigate their way through assorted difficulties. At times this necessitates extended and lengthy interactional work, in order to resolve moments of misunderstanding or lack of linguistic or cultural knowledge (see for example *Extract 1*). However, not once in the corpus that the author has gathered thus far has a conversation-for-learning encounter broken down.

We have also seen how participants willingly question and experiment with language resources or vocabulary—specifically, items that the participants are unaccustomed to at least to some extent. In *Extract 2*, Satoshi's seemingly newly-acquired spelling out strategy was used to quickly repair a moment of uncertainty on the part of his interlocutor. It was deployed in a very sequentially compact manner at that time. This strategy was encountered at first with obvious difficulty and unfamiliarity (as indicated throughout *Extract 1*) but was skillfully put into practice (in *Extract 2*) to repair a problem of communication *at the very next opportunity* in the same conversational encounter! In *Extract 3*, through inserted question sequences and following the clear model example provided by Steve, Aiko uses an (ostensibly) unfamiliar term to precisely answer the question asked of her.

Based on the author's own personal experiences as a language teacher, students are much more reluctant to take the same interactional risks in typical language classroom situations, than they are here, in more intimate and status-equal conversation-for-learning situations. Thus, in conversation-for-learning, there appears to be a heightened willingness to communicate, and an increased commitment to doing the interactional work necessary to communicate. This remains an open matter for further investigation.

In conversation-for-learning, unlike in typical classroom-based situations, there are no fixed participant roles, so learners are required to organize and structure these interactions on their own. With repeated engagement in conversation-for-learning, students can expand their repertoire of target language resources. For instance, by *re-using* what they engage in, students can increase sequential compactness, reducing the length of repair sequences which may otherwise detract from the topic at hand in subsequent interactions, or in the *very same encounter* as we have seen.

This is not to say that conversation-for-learning outweighs classroom-based interaction at all. Both offer important, but different, opportunities for language learning (Markee, 2000).

We can probably never say with certainty what students 'learn' or even 'retain' from any given learning situation. However, we *can* see that, during conversation-for-learning, participants put all manner of linguistic resources, cultural knowledge and interactional skills into practice to skillfully manage their encounters. It is spontaneous, even unpredictable. But, surely from a pedagogical perspective we can all agree that it has merit.

Not every language learning environment can be recorded and analyzed. However, we, as language teachers, ought to do what we can to document specific aspects of the language learning environments that we have access to, and we should encourage our students to engage in a wide variety of language learning situations—whether they be teacher-facilitated or self-managed, or inside or outside of the formal language classroom.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Basic Conversation Analysis (CA) Transcription Conventions

[	Point of overlap onset
]	Point of overlap termination
=	Latched utterances
(1.4)	Interval between utterances (in seconds)
(.)	Very short untimed pause (0.2 seconds or less; a micropause)
e:r the:::	Lengthening of the preceding sound
-	Abrupt cutoff
?	Rising intonation, not necessarily a question
!	Animated or emphatic tone
,	Low-rising intonation, suggesting continuation
.	Falling (final) intonation
CAPITALS	Increased volume relative to surrounding talk
do <u>you</u>	Underlining of (part of) an utterance is used to indicate some form of stress or emphasis, either by increased loudness or higher pitch
↑ ↓	Marked shifts into higher or lower pitch in the utterance following the arrow
° °	Utterances between degree signs are noticeably quieter than surrounding talk
< >	Talk enclosed within angle brackets is produced more slowly or more drawn out than neighboring talk
> <	Talk surrounded by reversed angle brackets is produced more quickly than neighboring talk
( )	A stretch of unclear, inaudible or unintelligible speech
→	Marks features of special interest
((nodding))	Non-speech activity or transcriptionist's comment(s)
R:	Identified speaker (participant identifier)

## APPENDIX 2

### Experiencing the strategy of 'spelling out'

#### *Extract 1 (Speakers: Satoshi and Robby)*

1 R: hello::  
2 S: hallo  
3 R: so: what's your na:me,  
4 S: ah my name is: (.) S:atoshi Gura  
5 R: ah oh purlea- can you spell it?  
6 (0.6)  
7 S: spelr?  
8 R: can you spell it, (.) [your] name  
9 S: [ah: ]  
10 (1.0)  
11 S: e:tto: ess a:y (.) [tee oh ]  
12 R: [ess (ay)]  
13 (1.0)  
14 R: ess ai ee o:  
15 S: tee tee oh  
16 R: ee tee oh? (.) Seiko?  
17 S: se- >ess ay tee oh ess aich ai<  
18 (1.0)  
19 R: ahkay .hh  
20 S: Satoshi  
21 (1.4)  
22 R: oka::y (1.0) so: (.) plea- please I (.) again,  
23 S: again (.) spell  
24 (1.0)  
25 R: yeah  
26 S: eh (.) ess a:y  
27 (0.4)  
28 R: ess ay,  
29 S: tee o:h  
30 (0.4)  
31 R: TEE or (.) tee?  
32 S: tee  
33 R: tee [sai]  
34 S: [tee] oh

35 (2.2)  
36 S: >ess [ay] tee ai<  
37 R: [(?)  
38 R: sa:yto  
39 **S: s::ato:sh:i:: [yes satoshi] (.) Satoshi**  
40 **R: [eh Satoshi ]**  
41 **(0.4)**  
42 **R: a::h okay**  
43 **(4.0)**  
44 **R: a::h okay .hh I understand huh [huh fine ]**  
45 S: [ha huh huh] .hh  
46 **(.) what what's your name**  
47 R: My name is ar Robby,  
48 (0.6)  
(Continues)

**APPENDIX 3**  
**Fluent *re*-use of ‘spelling out’**

***Extract 2 (Speakers: Satoshi and Robby)***

164 R: yeah .si yeah it's Germany (.)  
165 and u:m d'you live here in in Saitama:? or  
166 (0.6)  
167 S: um no::w: I live in Saitama (but) I'm from (.) Fukuoka  
168 (0.4)  
169 R: Fuko  
170 S: Fukuoka  
171 R: Fuoka  
172 **S: Fukuoka (.)**  
173 **eff you (1.0) kay o::h (.) ah eff you ki- kay you o:h kay ay**  
174 **[Fu ku (oka) ]**  
175 R: [Fukuoka ah:::] (.) understand  
176 S: do you know Fukuoka  
177 R: mmm not [really where is it exactly]  
178 S: [ha ha ha ]  
(Continues)

## APPENDIX 4 Using unfamiliar vocabulary

### *Extract 3 (Speakers: Aiko and Steve)*

359 S: .Hh so when are your off days,  
360 (0.7)  
361 A: **off day?**  
362 S: mm↑hmnn, fr̩om w- ur when do you not work,  
363 (0.8)  
364 A: **uuunnn::: when,**  
365 (1.3)  
366 A: **(ah) sss-, (0.5) e- er- pardon?**  
367 [huhaahuh.shh]  
368 S: [>Oh sorry ] no problem<.  
369 A: Huha  
370 S: I ↓ur for example like I don't work on ah::  
371 I'm off on Monday and Thursdays,  
372 (0.4)  
373 A: ↑A::h huh↑huh,  
374 (0.6)  
375 S: alwa[ys, ]  
376 A: [ahhhh]  
377 (0.8)  
378 A: **hmn::: I'm off, (0.4) ↓em .ph Saturday, (0.6)**  
379 **<an> >ah!< (.) Thursday? [today? Nnn ]**  
380 S: [ >Ohwr okay,< ]  
381 S: Ah: [wr ] Thursdays,  
382 A: [Hnn, ]  
383 S: coo[l.  
384 A: [Hm↑hm,  
(Continues)



## **A Course to Foster Literature Appreciation in EFL Students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the design, implementation, and student evaluation of a two-semester content-based literature course for first year EFL students at a private university in Japan. The goal of the course was to introduce a wide variety of English language authors and their works to build a positive attitude towards the study of literature in a second language. Results of a year-end survey indicate that the curriculum outlined in this paper may facilitate development of a positive attitude towards both the study of EFL and literature.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The study of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and of English literature are, at first glance, entirely separate academic endeavors. After all, many EFL students' primary language learning goal is operational proficiency with the English language in a variety of situations, not appreciation of the target culture through meaningful digestion of its literature. Poetry, specifically, has traditionally been seen as too archaic and abstract to be useful for language learners (Khatib, 2011). There are, however, some researchers who have argued that the inclusion of literature in the language learning classroom can have a wide variety of different benefits for language learners. (Maley & Duff, 1989).

This paper outlines the development of a content-based university EFL course whose primary goals were to introduce freshman students to English language culture, specifically poetry, and to facilitate language learning over the course of two semesters. The first part of this paper is a review of the literature containing the theoretical underpinnings that informed curricular design decisions. Then, the context in which the course was designed, the syllabus, and its materials will be described. Finally, results of a semester-end student survey will be discussed to make an argument about how this course might affect EFL student attitudes towards the study of English literature, as well as how the course could be more effectively implemented in the future.

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Approaches to EFL Literature Instruction**

Literature has a long and unstable history in language teaching. Throughout the historical record of formal language education, spanning from the time of ancient Greece until the recent past, the formal study of the translation of literature was a centerpiece of language study (Schultz, 2001).

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Particularly from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Grammar Translation method, whose benchmark of language learning success was the successful transfer of cultural nuance between one's first language and a second language, was centered around literature. According to Richards and Rogers (2001), this style of language learning was seen as either an important exercise in steeping oneself in the culture of the target language, or as a practice in intellectual discipline and development of good learning habits.

More recent approaches to foreign language teaching, however, have turned away from this traditional approach towards a more practical, communicative approach. Dörnyei (2009) suggests this is likely due to dissatisfaction with the overly simplified definition of language proficiency outlined in grammar translation methodology and the tendency of institutions to make erroneous assumptions about student language ability based on discrete-point tests. Unlike the non-interactive, strictly academic nature of the Grammar Translation method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology centers instruction on skills that can be used for meaningful communication. While the change in language learning goals accompanying this new methodology made language learning success more accessible for less academically inclined learners, the appreciation of formal literature as a language learning tool faded. Artistic expression through language was seen as less practical and therefore less useful for EFL and ESL students. Literature, specifically poetry, was seen as being too structurally complex, too culturally remote, and varying too far from conventional grammatical use to be useful in the communicative classroom (Khatib, 2011).

There has been significant push-back against this eviction of literature from the language classroom since the advent of CLT. Many researchers have argued that the fear of poetry as text is unfounded, and that poetry contains great learning potential for EFL students (Maley & Duff, 1989; Widdowson, 1992; Rosenkjar, 2006). The wide variety of thematic and linguistic variation in poetry presents a large number of unique learning opportunities, from the phoneme level up to the meta-textual level, though poems tend to be relatively short in length. Many themes in poetry are universally timeless representations of the human condition, and open to free interpretation and recontextualization by learners. These arguments suggest that poetry could be an effective text for introducing learners to new elements of language and culture.

## **Factors that Influence Attitudes Towards Second Language Literature Study**

An important consideration when designing EFL curricula which include poetry, is the preexisting bias towards literature in students and the effect that this may have on their attitude in the class. Davis, Gorell, Kline, and Hsieh (1992) conducted a survey of the underlying factors that affect undergraduate student attitudes towards the study of literature in a foreign language. They surveyed 175 undergraduate students studying French at an American university and found the general attitude of students in introductory FFL literature courses was very positive. There were three factors which strongly contributed to positive attitude towards FFL literature study. The first was the amount of self-motivated leisure reading done outside of classes. Students who read extensively in the foreign language are more likely to enjoy literature study. The second was preferred learning style. Students given an opportunity to interact with and respond to the text enjoyed literature study more. The final factor was family background. Learners with access to a wide variety of books, in a family environment which encouraged reading, were more likely to enjoy FFL literature study. In addition, they found no significant relationship between travel in the foreign language environment and positive attitude towards literature. These findings seem to suggest that even learners from monolingual cultures without experience living abroad, typical traits of many Japanese university students, may have no significant negative bias towards the study of EFL literature, and that given the right classroom environment, can even develop a positive attitude towards this study. The right classroom environment can vary according to the goals of a course and the approach taken to reach those goals.

## **Approaches to Teaching Poetry**

The two most popular approaches to teaching poetry are the stylistic approach and the reader-response approach (Kellem, 2009). The stylistic approach stresses the use of linguistic evidence within the text to inform an understanding of the text's message. Rosenkjar (2006) gives several examples of grammar and vocabulary-focused reading activities meant to help learners parse the message of a poem. Kellem (2009) states that this approach is easily integrated into the ESL curriculum because of its focus on language forms. The reader-response approach, on the other hand, stresses the construction of meaning in a poem through the reader's interaction with it. Schultz (2001) describes the process of reading using this approach as "meaning-making" through the interaction between the learners pre-existing knowledge structures and those of a text. The reader-response approach accepts multiple interpretations of an individual text as interpreted through a learner's individual experiences, and is thus well suited for content-based classes in which authentic interaction with texts is the primary goal of instruction.

Rather than focusing on either stylistic or reader-response approaches, Kellem (2009) suggests blending the two into what he calls "The Foremeaning Response" approach. This approach seems most appropriate for building a classroom atmosphere for communicative engagement with EFL literature, and was adopted in the course outlined in this paper. Kellem's approach "places equal importance on the study of language elements and on responding personally to poetry." (p.12) Doing so provides learners with the opportunity to improve their language skills and enhance their reading experience through personal interaction with the text. The first stage in this approach requires learners to analyze the stylistic features of a poem, and examine how these features inform the meaning, or interpretations, of the poet's message. Drawing explicit attention to linguistic features helps students notice differences between the L2 and their own language. Following the form and meaning attending phase of this approach, students should be encouraged to respond to their interpretation of the poem. This component is in line with Reader-response theory, encouraging students to build their own, personalized reading of the text by relating the meaning they have interpreted in the first phase to their own lives. The overall strength of the Foremeaning Response Approach, according to Kellem, is that it "is designed to bridge the gap between aesthetic and stylistic reading approaches, and to show how pleasure and understanding can coincide and feed off of each other." (p. 15)

## **COURSE CONTEXT**

This course was originally designed for freshman university students in the American and European Culture department at a large, private university in Japan. The course title was "Freshman Culture" and was a required, two-semester course for all majors in the department with 30 meetings. There were four uncoordinated sections of the course taught by different instructors. While instructors of each section of the course were free to choose a textbook and write an original syllabus, the institution requested that the material have something to do with English literature, as knowledge of famous authors and their works, as well as the ability to discuss them in English, were a major part of the students course of study. In addition, the institution requested that the course integrate the four major language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), as well as promote critical thinking skills in English. The students were described as Low Intermediate level English speakers, around CEFR B1 proficiency, though it was assumed that there would be a range of abilities both below and above this average.

## **COURSE DESIGN**

### **Goals**

As described above, the institution requested a course which introduced students to the culture of an English-speaking country, focusing on the writers and literature of that culture. Based on guidance from the institution, and the anticipated classroom context, the following goals were set for the course:

By the end of this course:

- 1) students will be able to (SWBAT) demonstrate an understanding of the basic cultural and historical background of a variety of English literary movements.
- 2) SWBAT demonstrate comprehension of the life stories of a variety of different English language poets, and how their lives compared to the standard of the time.
- 3) SWBAT demonstrate an understanding of popular interpretations of a variety of English language poems.
- 4) SWBAT articulate their own thoughts about and interpretations of a variety of English language poems and share them orally and in writing.

### **Syllabus Design**

The course adopted a content-based syllabus using a mixture of modified and unmodified authentic materials and was divided into three different modules. Each module covered one of three different literary movements: Romanticism, Transcendentalism, and Modernism. The first lesson of each module was an introduction of the new literary movement. Each consequent lesson in the module highlighted a single author from the time period and one of their representative poems. The number of authors covered in each module varied, with the largest number of authors covered in the Modernism movement. The purpose of this imbalance was to spend the most time covering writing in a context most familiar to students. Davis et. al (2002) explained that lack of relevance to the students can be a significant barrier in achieving language learning goals. Thus, Modernist poetry having, on average, less archaic grammar and vocabulary use compared with the previous two movements, was likely to be the most comprehensible to students and therefore the most extensively studied.

### **Material Design**

In order to mitigate the level of difficulty of texts and make students feel comfortable with the course's challenging content, the course used lesson templates, one for each of the two different types of classes. Materials for both lesson templates were designed based on the pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activity structure suggested by Grabe (2009) as an effective way to promote meaningful interaction with a text.

#### ***Literary Movement Introduction Lessons***

The main text of the literary movement introduction lessons was a short (250 to 300 word) essay introducing the etymology of the movement's name, historical context, and a short comparison of the movement to the one which preceded it. The vocabulary of this text was controlled so that 95% or more of all words were taken from the 3,000 highest frequency vocabulary items in the British National Corpus (BNC). This standard of vocabulary profile was chosen based on Nation's (2006) suggestion of the 3,000 highest frequency words being sufficient for comprehension of a variety of written texts, and its realistic achievability for EFL students. The prereading activity for the literary movement introduction lessons was a survey introducing students

to the prevailing philosophy of the literary movement. Each survey was designed so that a specific answer pattern revealed the core ideas of the literary movement. For example, the Romanticism introductory survey contained questions like these:

Do you think that people in the country understand the meaning of life better than people in the city?

Do you think that imagination is more important than logic?

A writer from the Romantic movement would have answered “yes” to both of these questions. Each survey had 10 or more questions introducing different facets of the philosophy of each movement.

The during-reading activity was a variety of closed-response-type reading comprehension questions, including a mix of multiple-choice, true-false, and pronoun reference questions. The post-reading activity was a reflective writing assignment meant to encourage students to critically think about the contents of the reading. In the Romanticism booklet, for example, students were asked to respond to the two following prompts:

Is daily life in the present day similar or different to life in romantic times? Give 3 reasons with examples.

Are you more like an Enlightenment thinker, or a Romantic thinker? Why?

These writing responses were scored with a style and content rubric that encouraged writers to follow academic paragraph writing conventions, such as indentation and even margins, clear topic sentences with controlling ideas, and supporting sentences with sufficient detail and expansion.

### ***Author Introduction Lessons***

The main text of the author introduction lessons was a famous poem. To prepare the students for the poem, there were several pre-reading activities. The first pre-reading activity was a listening fluency activity. A 250-300 word biography of the author was written for this activity and vocabulary controlled so that 95% of all words were drawn from the highest frequency 3,000 words in the BNC. The text was read aloud, and the students answered multiple-choice and cloze questions about the context of the passage. The text was then distributed to students and was read silently. After checking the answers, the students did an ordering activity using the text and eight events from the author’s life. Following this activity, four famous quotes from the author were introduced, and the students had a short discussion in groups of three or four about what the quotes might mean, and in what frame of mind the author may have been. Following the discussion, there was a vocabulary building activity in which students looked up words from the poem on a list prepared by the teacher, which included all vocabulary outside of the highest frequency 2,000 lists, as well as any other vocabulary used in the poem that was expected to be problematic for the students.

The during-reading activity consisted of questions to help guide students through the poem. In accordance with the Formeaning Response Approach, there were two categories of questions. Questions that focused on linguistic elements of the poem tasked students with identifying grammatical and stylistic elements, such as verb tense, word choice, and syntax, and thinking about how these elements contributed to the meaning of the poem. Meaning focused questions encouraged students to reflect upon the authors life and the historical background of the movement to make assumptions about the meaning of the poem. These responses were not judged on accuracy, but on whether or not they were logically reasoned. Questions were either answered alone and then discussed in groups, or discussed in groups and then answered alone in order to facilitate

negotiation of meaning, which has been proven as an effective way to promote language learning through student-student interaction (Ellis, 2003; Long, 1996).

The post-reading activity was, as with the movement introduction lessons, a writing response that encouraged students to think critically about the themes in the main reading, and re-contextualize them within their own experience. This paragraph was graded with a rubric similar to the writing rubric in the literary movement lesson that encouraged writers to adhere to the conventions of academic writing and expand upon answers with supporting details.

## STUDENT REACTION

### Exit Survey

The Student Exit Survey was administered to students during the 30<sup>th</sup> and final meeting of the two-semester course. The primary purpose of the survey was to measure change in student attitude towards the study of literature in an EFL setting as a result of having taken the course. The secondary purpose of the survey was to gather information on how to improve the course in future iterations.

The survey consisted of 13 5-point Likert response questions. All questions and response choices were written in Japanese. Translated into English, possible responses to each question were: 5: Completely agree; 4: Agree somewhat; 3: Neither agree nor disagree; 2: Disagree somewhat; 1: Completely disagree. Questions were divided into three different sets. The first four questions asked retroactively about attitude toward literature prior to entering the course. The next six questions asked about course design, material design, and instruction. The last three questions asked about current attitudes towards literature. A copy of the Student Exit Survey can be found in Appendix 1.

The survey was administered in the 30<sup>th</sup> and final class meeting. A total of 21 students took the survey. Students had 15-minutes to respond to the survey anonymously, after which they were allowed to leave. The researcher was not in the same room at the time of the survey. Table 1 contains a summary of student survey responses.

**Table 1**  
**Student Exit Survey Results**

	Ques 1	Ques 2	Ques 3	Ques 4	Ques 5	Ques 6	Ques 7
avg	3.05	3.10	3.19	2.38	2.71	4.00	3.00
sd	1.47	1.26	1.21	1.43	1.31	1.00	0.95
min / max	1 / 5	1 / 5	1 / 5	1 / 5	1 / 5	1 / 5	1 / 5
	Ques 8	Ques 9	Ques 10	Ques 11	Ques 12	Ques 13	
avg	2.67	1.70	2.29	4.05	4.14	3.81	
sd	0.97	0.73	0.90	0.74	0.73	0.87	
min / max	1 / 5	1 / 3	1 / 4	2 / 5	3 / 5	3 / 5	

### Change in student attitude towards the study of literature in EFL

In order to measure the change in student attitude towards the study of literature in the EFL setting as a result of having taken this course, the responses to questions 1 through 4, and 11 through 13 were compared. To consider improvements to future iterations of the course, responses to questions 5 through 10 were examined. First, questions 1 through 4 will be discussed.

Questions 1 through 4 were the following:

1. *Before entering university, English language class was fun.*
2. *I entered this university specifically because I was interested in literature.*
3. *I entered this university because I was interested in English and American literature.*
4. *At the time of university entrance, I knew more about or was more interested in American and European literature than other people.*

Responses to the first four questions suggests the following conclusions about student attitude towards literature prior to taking the course. There was an even distribution of students with positive and negative attitude towards the study of EFL prior to university entrance. Studying the English language was not an overwhelmingly strong motivator in enrollment in the program. Though it is impossible to determine why the students answered as they did, perhaps the majority had become disillusioned with the study of EFL following seven years of compulsory English education prior to university entrance. Interest in studying literature, English and American literature in particular, was neither a strong nor weak motivator in student university choice. Studying literature was not an overwhelmingly strong motivator for enrollment in the program, either. Again, it is difficult to ascertain why this may have been, but perhaps the students, like many of their affluent counterparts, saw university in the same way as they saw high school: another compulsory stage in their 16-year educational journey. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), 2,099,000 students, or 57% of all high school graduates went on to university in 2018 (MEXT, 2018). This is the largest percentage attendance of university by high school graduates in Japan's history. Perhaps the students felt some kind of peer pressure to attend college for the sake of their own futures despite not having any strong motivation to study a specific topic, and ended up in this program because it was the only one that accepted them. Less than a third of students felt they knew more about or were more interested in American and European literature than the people around them before university entrance. As a result, it can be assumed previous knowledge relevant to course content could neither be expected to bias their opinion of the course's content difficulty, nor be relevant to their academic motivation for choosing their university and course of study. In sum, prior to the course, students did not display a strong positive attitude towards the study of ESL, literature in general, or American and English literature specifically.

Questions 11 through 13 were the following:

11. *I have more interest in English and American literature now than I did before taking this class.*
12. *If there were another course similar to this one, I'd like to take it.*
13. *Even without another course, I would like to study more English and American literature on my own.*

Responses to these three questions suggest the following. First, though students, on average, did not have a strong level of interest in literature before entering the university and taking this course, following the course their interest in the subject matter had increased. Second, if another course based on similar principles, with similar materials, and similar instructional methods were offered in the future, almost all students would opt to take it. These two results indicate a positive change in attitude towards the study of literature in the EFL context. Finally, though they came into the program without exhibiting a strong interest or desire to study literature, through the course they developed such a positive attitude towards the study of English literature that none of the students denied an interest in further study of it without the guidance of a class.

## **Course Improvement**

In order to decide how to improve the course in future iterations, responses to questions 5

through 10 were examined. Questions 5 through 10 were the following:

5. *When I first saw the syllabus for this class, I was not at all worried about whether or not I could keep up with the content.*
6. *I clearly understand the goal of this class.*
7. *The reading assignments for this class were very easy.*
8. *The writing assignments for this class were very easy.*
9. *The teacher spoke too much Japanese.*
10. *I wanted to study more of my own favorite English books and poems.*

Responses to these questions suggest the following. Around two thirds of students were not particularly worried about their ability to succeed in the class prior to the first meeting. This suggests that the syllabus presented to students was informational and written in a nonthreatening way that did not immediately inspire unease, so improvement may not be necessary.

All of the students, save one, clearly understood the goal of the class by the end of the course. This seems to indicate that expectations of student performance were clear throughout the course and that students, regardless of whether or not they enjoyed the course, at least understood its purpose.

Over half of the students did not feel the reading assignments were either too difficult, or too easy. The narrow standard deviation indicates the prevalence of this trend among the students as well. It seems as though the readings, both the essays, and the poetry, were accessible to the students at their current level.

Students felt that the writing assignments were more challenging overall than the reading assignments. This was in line with expectation, as writing is a typically difficult foreign language skill to acquire without practice, and students in Japan do not typically have many opportunities to practice writing in school. The students may simply not have had as much experience with the activity of summarizing their own thoughts on a topic. Furthermore, positive responses to question 6 indicate they understood the goals of the course and suggests that lack of practice of writing was more likely to have contributed to the difficulty of the activity than lack of clarity of its purpose in the course.

Use of the L1, Japanese, by the instructor, was common in the classroom. This was because the explanation of certain abstract concepts, for which the learners lacked specific English vocabulary, was required. That the students may have felt that the level of Japanese use in the classroom was inappropriate for a university EFL class was a point of concern, but that does not appear to have been the case. Though around 15% of students felt they may have been able to achieve success in the class without Japanese, they did not feel strongly so, and the use of L1 to supplement explanation seems to have been justifiable.

A final point of concern in the course design was the lack of learner autonomy in text selection and activities. Dörnyei (2001) suggested that offering students the opportunity to provide input into the text and activities they study is an important factor in fostering intrinsic motivation. However, it would appear that the students by and large appreciated having the curriculum fully planned for them. Only one student, in fact, agreed slightly that more input into curriculum planning would have been appreciated. The free response section of this survey indicated this was because he wanted to study film, music, and television, not poetry. The fact that students developed a positive attitude towards the study of English literature, and many of them displayed a strong desire to continue their study of literature following the course further strengthens the argument that the lack of autonomy in text and activity choice did not hinder the development of a positive attitude towards the study of literature in the EFL context, and thus improvements are not necessary.

There were several limitations to this survey and its analysis. First, it was administered on the last day of class. Thus, students were asked to report their feelings prior to taking the course in retrospect, which may have influenced the data. Second, the lack of redundancy in the survey makes



it difficult to make confident conclusions about student responses. Third, responses were not analyzed with regression analysis. Further analysis may reveal unexpected and undiscussed trends in the data. To improve the survey, constructs should be clearly defined and redundant question sets should be created. Furthermore, the first part of the survey should be administered to students on the first day of class to more accurately measure attitude change over time. Finally, multiple regression analysis should be performed on the data to reveal underlying response patterns and correlation in the data.

## CONCLUSION

The paper discussed an undergraduate English course in Japan with a content focus on English literature to illustrate how an approach to literature and poetry analysis with emphasis on both stylistic reading and reader-response strategies can present successful and satisfying learning opportunities for EFL students. It has presented course and material design that has been proven effective at both leading students to an organic, personalized understanding of classical English literature, and a greater motivation to study literature in the future. Because of the scaffolded nature of text presentation and response writing criteria, it could also be argued that this course contributes to second language acquisition as well.

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**Appendix 1**  
**Student Exit Survey**

Please answer the following questions.

	全く当てはまる	やや当てはまる	どちらとも言えない	あまり当てはまらない	全く当てはまらない
1. 大学に入学する前は、英語の授業が楽しかった。	5	4	3	2	1
2. 大東文化大学に入学したのは文学に興味があったからだ。	5	4	3	2	1
3. 大東文化大学に入学したのは <u>英米文学</u> に興味があったからだ。	5	4	3	2	1
4. 入学時、 <u>英米文学</u> について、自分は他の人より知識や興味があった	5	4	3	2	1
5. 本授業のシラバスを初めて見たとき、ついていけるかどうかについて全く心配ではなかった。	5	4	3	2	1
6. 今は授業の目標ははっきり分かっている。	5	4	3	2	1
7. 本授業の読む課題はとても簡単だった。	5	4	3	2	1
8. 本授業の書く課題はとても簡単だった。	5	4	3	2	1
9. 授業で先生は日本語を使い過ぎだ。	5	4	3	2	1
10. もっと自分の好きな英語の本・詩・ジャンルについて学びたかった。	5	4	3	2	1
11. 本授業を受ける前と比べて今は英米文学に興味がある。	5	4	3	2	1
12. 本授業と同じような授業があったら受けてみたい。	5	4	3	2	1
13. 授業がなくても、これから自分でもっと英米文学について学びたい	5	4	3	2	1

1~14についてさらに細かく答えなければ下の空欄を使ってください。

# **Autism and Bilingualism: Recent Research, Parent Perspectives, and Practitioner Support: A Literature Review**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This literature review outlines an exploration of the extant published studies on autism and bilingualism. The following guiding questions were used to shape the review: What does the literature say about autism and bilingualism? What are parents' perspectives on autism and bilingualism? What are practitioners' perspectives and the level of support provided for autistic people who want or need to develop communication skills in two languages? It was found that, first, exposure to two or more languages has no adverse effects on autistic children. In fact, according to the limited research, there are some positive effects to bilingual exposure. Second, parents often feel apprehensive to expose their autistic children to more than one language but, at the same time, they feel they cannot avoid it because, in their context, bilingualism is not a lifestyle choice but an unavoidable reality. Parents also want their children to experience the linguistic, social, and cognitive benefits of bilingualism. Third, it is assumed that practitioners recommend a one language (OL) policy to parents of autistic children. However, this is not always the case, according to the literature. There are numerous other factors that influence practitioner recommendations, including a lack of support for bilingual education and intervention services. To conclude, there is very little research that has been done in this area. Further research is needed to confirm the findings above but it is likely that some autistics can and do become successful bilinguals or multilinguals. The path to their dual or multiple language acquisition needs further examination. In addition, parents and practitioners need more support in the form of further research which can drive the development of educational programs.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Approximately half of the world population is bilingual and millions more learn additional languages during their lifetimes. (Crystal, 2012). Traditionally seen as a threat, over 50 years of research has provided us with the concrete evidence that bilingualism is not a confusing phenomenon that erodes a person's ability to proficiently use their mother tongue (Bialystok, 2001). In fact, speaking two or more languages on a daily basis is associated with enhanced cognitive and linguistic ability and is linked with social and economic benefits (Bialystok, 2001). The number of bilingual and multilingual people are increasing, as are the number of autistic people (Frombonne, 2003). While some argue that there is an autism epidemic, others state that the increasing number of autistic people is simply due to better awareness of the condition and better diagnostic tools (Frombonne, 2003). Despite improved understanding and awareness, autism is still not completely

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understood. What experts do agree on is that autism is a neurobiological disorder that presents clinically in a variety of ways including difficulty with social and verbal communication (Volkmar, Rogers, Paul, & Pelphey, 2014). Recently, researchers have begun to turn their attention to bilingual people with autism. Their work can be categorized into three strands. First, researchers have explored the effects of bilingual exposure (BE) on autistic people. Preliminary findings indicate that there are no additional difficulties imposed. In fact, there may be some benefits associated with BE. Second, researchers have probed the views of parents on raising their autistic children bilingually. While parents often hesitate to raise their autistic children in two languages many feel that they have no other choice. Third, scholars have looked at practitioner recommendations to families of children with autism. Practitioners often recommend one language (OL) policies but their personal opinions do not match their professional suggestions. Practitioners state they make OL recommendations based on the lack of services.

In this literature review, the terms autistic, people with autism, people on the spectrum, and people with an ASD diagnosis are used. Person first (autistic) and identity first (person with autism) have been chosen to represent the preferred terminology of both the autistic self- advocacy community and practitioners and The American Psychological Association (APA).

## **AUTISM AND BILINGUALISM**

In this first strand of the literature review, studies that indicate there are no known negative effects of BE among the autistic population will be reviewed. Additionally, a number of studies that demonstrate there may be benefits to autistic people being exposed to a second or foreign language will be summarized.

### **No Known Negative Effects of BE Among Autistics**

While there is still a dearth of research on the topic, the limited number of studies that have been conducted to date indicate that BE among the autistic population has no negative effects. The earliest research conducted was in 2006 when Seung, Siddiqi, and Elder did a case study involving a Korean boy who was first diagnosed with ASD at age 3.6 years. The parents of the boy were living and working in the United States at the time of the diagnosis and the boy was treated in Florida. For the first year after diagnosis, the boy received therapy exclusively in Korean to build his expressive and receptive vocabulary and his ability to respond to oral instructions. Following that initial year, the boy then began receiving bilingual therapy in Korean and English. For the last six months of his stay in the United States, the boy received therapy exclusively in English. While this study does not compare the boy to any peers with or without autism, the authors concluded that the boy's ability to use both languages at home and in therapy indicates that it is possible for children with ASD to function bilingually without additional difficulty in comparison to their typically developing peers. The researchers further recommended that therapy should be provided to children in their home language and, once their communicative abilities have improved, a second language, usually the majority language used outside the home, can be introduced without detriment.

While the researchers concluded that children with ASD can become bilingual, there are several limitations to this study. First, it is a case study of a boy who was diagnosed relatively early, had a mild diagnosis of ASD without any other complicating diagnoses, and received approximately 20 hours of formal therapy with a skilled, bilingual practitioner, followed by an additional 20 hours a week of home-based therapy with bilingual, well-educated parents. This represents the best of circumstances and, even if a child shares a similar diagnosis to this boy, he or she may not have access to high-quality bilingual therapy and an extremely supportive home environment. An

additional weakness of the study is that, although the boy's test scores were included in the data, it is impossible to know at what level he was functioning in either English or Korean on the pragmatic level. Pragmatics refers to how one uses language in context and it is normally at the pragmatic level where autistic people have difficulty (Baron-Cohen, 1988). While the boy may have been able to display both receptive and productive vocabulary during testing, there is no indication of how the boy used language for daily communication and there are no samples of his speech.

Since the study by Seung et al. (2006), all other studies conducted in this area have been quantitative and have compared the language development of BE and monolingually exposed (ME) children with ASD. The first study in this series compared the lexical diversity of 14 ME children with 14 BE children, all with ASD (Petersen, Marinova-Todd, & Mirenda, 2012). Children were matched for age, level of diagnostic severity, and family income level and had an average age of 4.5 years. The researchers found that the BE children had a larger productive vocabulary and an equal receptive vocabulary when compared to their ME peers. In the conclusion of the study, researchers recommended maintenance of both languages upon an autism diagnosis. However, they also noted that both languages do not need to be in parallel usage. One language is almost always used more than another and parents and practitioners should tailor language and communication goals to the current and future needs of the child. While this investigation has a fairly large sample size for such a limited population, one weakness of this study is similar to the weakness of the previous study. The main focus is on vocabulary. However, verbal people with autism can, by definition, acquire vocabulary. The problem lies in how they use this vocabulary for communication.

A similar study was conducted in 2012 and led by Ohashi, Mirenda, Marinova-Todd, Hambly, Fombonne, Szatneri and Volden (2012). This study reviewed Petersen et al.'s (2012) work and suggested that one limitation was that the children were slightly older (4.5) than the 3.5 year olds Petersen et al.'s (2012) study and part of the positive BE results of the study could have been accounted for by the heavy exposure to therapy the children had received. As a result, Ohashi et al., (2012) wanted to examine younger children who had been exposed to two languages since birth and had just received an ASD diagnosis. They examined 20 BE children and 40 ME children. The children were matched based on chronological age, level of diagnostic severity, parent education, and combined family income. The results of the study indicated that there was no difference in the expressive or receptive language abilities in the BE group when compared to the ME group. Again, the limitations of this study are in the fact that the researchers focused on speaking and listening skills. However, autistic children may speak at the same level as their typically-developing peers but simultaneously be unable to use language in a pragmatically correct way. Even at a very young age, verbal children with ASD can be identified due to the way in which they use language, not only by an absence or a delay in language (Volkmar, et al., 2014).

Whereas the two quantitative studies outlined above focused primarily on expressive and receptive language, another study published a year earlier by Sen and Geetha (2011) compared ME and BE children with ASD using a battery of tests to examine not only vocabulary but also the syntactic structures of sentences and semantics. Most autistic children have some problems with irregular syntax and many also have trouble with semantics (Volkmar et al., 2014). This study examined children aged 4-10 who were matched for age, diagnostic severity, social demographics, and level of education. Findings indicated that there was no difference in scores between the ME and the BE children. This study was conducted in India where multilingualism is the norm and, as a result, researchers recommended that children be exposed to both the home language and other majority languages so that they can participate in their communities to the full extent of whatever their future abilities may be. While one of the strengths of this study is the additional focus on semantic and syntactic skills, no samples of language were published by the researchers, nor was there any qualitative assessment of what children are able to do with language beyond the realm of the test. Many autistic children are regularly tested and often become skilled at passing (Volkmar et al., 2014). However, when the supportive testing environment is taken away, the question remains as to how effectively children can use language in real situations.

In China, Reetzke, Zou, Sheng, and Katsos (2015) conducted a study quite different from other studies. Their research looked at both structural and pragmatic use of language and defined pragmatics as the ability to use language appropriately in a given context. Researchers matched 31 ME children with 23 BE children with ASD and used similar controls (age, level of education, socio-economic background etc.) as the studies above. After testing the children, the researchers found no statistically significant differences in the children's language structure or pragmatic usage. The researchers concluded that their study made a significant contribution to the literature because the other studies conducted to date could not control for the amount of treatment a child had received. According to the researchers, the children in this study had not received any formal treatment. However, treatment can come in many forms and parents who are particular about language, possibly parents who are raising their children bilingually, may have been more focused on language acquisition than the parents of the ME peers. However, it may also be, as the researchers concluded, that ME and BE children with ASD have the same linguistic development patterns and, therefore, any advice to adhere to OL is not supported by the minimal evidence collected thus far.

### **Positive Effects of BE Among People With ASD**

While the studies reviewed in the previous section seem to indicate that BE children with ASD do not differ significantly from their ME peers mainly in terms of expressive and receptive language, limited additional studies suggest that BE children may be at an advantage when compared to ME peers. Hambly and Fombonne (2012) examined both the social and linguistic abilities of 45 BE children with those of 30 ME children. The BE children were divided into two groups: those who had been exposed to two languages since birth and those who had been exposed to an additional language at a later stage. Contrary to their hypothesis that BE children would experience additional language delays, the researchers found no differences in the language test scores of the children. However, the BE group of children that had heard two languages from birth had statistically significant higher social interaction scores. The researchers noted that although certain children had BE from birth, these children had much weaker levels of vocabulary in their less dominant language and only a few had progressed to phrase level speech. In terms of higher social interaction, the only indicators measured were pointing and attention to voice. If children had had therapy to remedy these issues, the measure of enhanced social interaction skills could be due to therapy and not BE. Building on Hambly and Fombonne's (2012) study, Valicenti-McDermott, Tarshis, Schouls, Galdston, Hottinger, Seijo, and Shinnar (2013) examined the expressive and receptive language skills of 40 BE (English-Spanish) children with 40 ME children (English only). The researchers found no statistically significant differences in the tested language skills. However, they did find that the BE group of children was more likely to vocalize and they were also more adept at gesturing. BE children also achieved statistically significantly higher scores on adaptive behavior tests. The researchers were not sure why BE children have these benefits and concluded that BE is not damaging or confusing to children with autism and may, in fact, have some advantages. Researchers were careful to caution, however, that more studies need to be conducted to determine why such benefits exist. They also noted that the language learning pattern of children with ASD does not follow that pattern of acquisition normally seen in typically-developing children. As a result, the researchers posited that different methodologies need to be used in order to best support ASD children as they acquire language.

One further study has also indicated that BE may present advantages to children with ASD. Baldimtsi, Peristeri, and Tsimpli (2014) conducted a study with 24 boys: 6 BE with ASD (Greek and English), 6 ME (Greek), 6 BE typically developing (Greek and English), and 6 ME typically developing (Greek). Rather than focusing on expressive and receptive vocabulary, the researchers designed a study in which participants were told a story and then had to recreate it in their own

words. This allowed researchers to examine not only vocabulary but also syntactic structures (which they termed “microstructural language use”) as well as story organization and level of detail (macrostructures). The researchers found no statistically significant differences between the performance of any of the groups in the microstructure category. However, in terms of macrostructure, children in the ME ASD group tended to focus on insignificant details of the story and had more trouble retelling the story in the correct order. The researchers posited that higher scores children in the BE ASD group had when compared with the ME ASD group may be as a result of bilingualism.

In addition to the primarily quantitative studies listed above that seem to indicate the possible benefits of BE for children with ASD, two qualitative case studies have also been conducted to date. The first explored the experiences of a Romanian family living and working in Spain (Bodea & Dorina, 2014). While in Spain, their three-year-old daughter was diagnosed with ASD. She received 1.5 years of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) in a therapeutic setting in Spanish, after which the family returned to Romania and began ABA in Romanian. In 2014, when the article was written, the girl was five years old and, according to parent report, speaks both Romanian and Spanish but there is no indication in the study of the level of her proficiency. After extensive interviews, the researcher revealed that the parents believed that their daughter’s exposure to both Spanish and Romanian at home and in therapy did not cause any negative effects. In fact, the parents felt that exposure to two languages benefited their child because having a strong foundation in one language allowed for the acquisition of a second language. In addition, parents believed that bilingualism added to the child’s cognitive and cultural development. While this piece of research may sound encouraging, there does not seem to be any measure of linguistic, cognitive, or cultural advantages to support the parents’ observation and that is a major weakness of this study. The findings do not seem to be valid unless there is some kind of measure to evaluate the supposed benefits.

An additional case study was also recently conducted by Yu (2016a) in which she examined a five year and ten-month old boy with ASD who spoke both Mandarin Chinese and American English. Using conversation analysis (CA) as a tool, Yu found that the boy used code-switching (the process of moving from one language to another) for both strategic and pragmatic reasons. Strategically, the boy changed from Chinese into English to clarify and emphasize his thoughts. Pragmatically, the boy changed from English into Chinese to signal his desire to end a conversation. These code-switching behaviors are similar to the ones used by typically developing children and Yu opined that they may reflect the ability of people with ASD to develop these skills without explicit instruction.

At the end of their study discussed above, Valicenti-McDermott et al., (2013) concluded that BE children do not appear to have more language acquisition difficulties than their ME peers. In addition, they noted that children with ASD, while capable of learning language, likely have different patterns of acquisition and difficulties that do not present themselves in typically developing children. As a result, they recommended more research into dual language acquisition in the ASD population. In response to this call, Hambly and Fombonne (2014) conducted research into the expressive language acquisition patterns among children with ASD. Their study explored the relationship between BE and linguistic, social, and cognitive factors and how BE affected expressive vocabulary acquisition. The researchers placed 33 children with ASD into three groups: those with no second language expressive vocabulary, those with some second language vocabulary, and those with high second language vocabulary. They found that social and cognitive impairment does not prevent the acquisition of second language expressive vocabulary but neither does BE guarantee it. Among the latter two groups, researchers found that expressive vocabulary maintenance and acquisition appears to depend on two variables; a strong foundation in a dominant language and recent exposure to the second language target vocabulary. This pattern of second language expressive vocabulary acquisition is similar to patterns found in BE children who are typically developing. The researchers suggested that rather than advising parents to follow an OL



policy, practitioners should take into consideration the child's dominant language skills and the amount of exposure to the second language that can be offered at home or in the community.

## **Section Summation**

According to the limited empirical literature that has been published to date, no problem has yet been identified with autistic children being exposed to more than one language. Despite most researcher hypotheses that BE could cause additional language delay in children with ASD, the results seem to indicate otherwise. In fact, there may be some possible benefits, including linguistic, social, and cognitive, but this is inconclusive due to the limited research on the topic. However, it is hard to imagine a situation in which a child growing up in a bilingual environment would not experience positive social consequences due to being able to communicate in two languages. Finally, there is a dearth of research to provide a foundation for bilingual instruction of and support for autistic people. The one study that has been conducted seems to indicate that BE children with autism need to have a solid foundation in the dominant language along with sustained, regular exposure to a second language in order to acquire expressive vocabulary successfully.

## **PARENT PERSPECTIVES**

This second strand of the literature review is focused on parental experiences and perspectives. Although the literature surveyed above indicates that it is possible and even beneficial to raise ASD children bilingually, the realities experienced by parents often include an aspect of "messiness" that is not apparent in the tidy findings of the primarily quantitative studies. Several researchers have conducted qualitative and mixed methods studies with parents that provide a window into the difficulties faced by families when making language policy decisions for the home.

### **Apprehension Mixed with Daily Bilingual Realities**

Hampton, Rabagliatia, Soraceb, and Fletcher-Watson (2017) interviewed 17 British parents of ASD children and found that parents often had hesitations about their bilingual family policies for reasons such as the fear of putting an extra burden on a child who is already struggling to communicate and a desire to avoid causing confusion. Parents also reported that their children sometimes lacked the social motivation associated with language learning. As such, the parents often lost the will to proceed with BE. At the same time, the researchers found that parents believed that BE would confer a number of advantages on their children including the ability to view situations from multiple perspectives, an enhanced sense of cultural awareness, tighter bonds with both the nuclear and extended family, and a connection to heritage. The majority of parents in the study also informed researchers that bilingualism was not always a self-selected choice but an externally-imposed reality. Finally, some parents said they did not speak English well enough to provide an English only environment in the home.

In Canada, Kay-Raining Bird, Lamond, and Holden (2012) conducted a mixed methods study and reported similar findings to Hampton et al. (2016). Of 49 parents surveyed, 75% were attempting to raise their ASD children bilingually and cited cultural enrichment and improved future job opportunities to support their choice. However, parents also stated that their language planning decisions often depended on the child's level of verbal functioning. Although many autistic people can communicate verbally, some need communication tools such as picture cards or electronic tablets. If children used communication devices, parents were less likely to advocate for BE. Parents also noted that another main issue they were struggling with was access to bilingual therapists.

Parents in the two studies reviewed in the section above tended to have mixed feelings about BE, wanting the benefits but, at the same time, fearing their children might be overburdened or confused. Parents also reported BE was not often supported by practitioners, nor were parents' cultural values and beliefs. In the next section, further details of this phenomenon will be reviewed.

## **Parents' Wishes Clash with Practitioner Recommendations**

In countries like Canada where bilingualism is an official language policy at the national level, there is still reported tension between parents who want their ASD children exposed to two languages and practitioners who seem to uniformly recommend OL (Kay-Raining Bird et al., 2012). However, in the United States, only 17% of families are raising their children bilingually compared to the global norm of 50% (Garcia, Breslau, Hansen, & Miller, 2012). This has created a unique tension between immigrant parents and ASD practitioners in the US that has been the focus of recent scholarship. According to research conducted by Kremer-Sadlik (2005), the majority of parents interviewed reported that they had been discouraged by practitioners from BE. Parents reported feeling unsure about discontinuing use of the home language for two primary reasons: first, they felt their children would be shut out of most of home life if they could not at least understand their heritage language and, second, parents feared that their English was not good enough to use it exclusively with their children.

Garcia et al., (2012) conducted an ethnographic study to probe this phenomenon with a mixed group of parents who were using diverse home languages including Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Hebrew, and Mandarin Chinese. All parents interviewed in this study reported they were told to follow an OL policy at home with their ASD children. Parents further reported numerous problems associated with this advice. For example, parents felt OL created a linguistic gulf between themselves and their children and between ASD children and their typically developing siblings. Also, parents reported experiencing a deep sense of grief that they could not express themselves to their children in their native language. They further feared that their children would be disconnected from their local heritage communities.

Similar research, with similar findings to Garcia et. al, was conducted by Jegatheesan (2009). This research focused only on Asian immigrant mothers, with whom she conducted semi-structured interviews. The mothers who participated in this research reported that they had been told by practitioners to follow an OL policy with their ASD children and this led to several difficulties including problems communicating in English due to a lack of proficiency and feeling that practitioners were unaware of the importance the family placed on the heritage language and culture.

In conjunction with other researchers, Jegatheesan conducted a follow-up study exploring how South Asian Muslim immigrant families in the United States navigate an autism diagnosis. Through extensive interviews and over a period of 17 months of observations, Jegatheesan, Fowler, and Miller (2010) found that parents in this demographic viewed autism as a complex disability, that their culture dictated different perceptions of the disability than were common in America, that there was much tension between themselves and practitioners, and there was a lack of access to appropriate bilingual services. The mothers, in particular, were upset by practitioner recommendations to follow OL because mothers primarily stayed at home and were not very proficient in English. They also felt that practitioners were unaware of the importance of family language practices and lacked cultural awareness.

In a final study on the topic of parent-practitioner relations, Jegatheesan (2011) reported that parents tended to ignore practitioner OL recommendations because they did not feel they could live their lives in English only. Parents in this study stated that they did not think they could raise their child without using multiple languages and they further believed in retrospect that they had made the right decision to immerse their children in multiple languages because it helped them to acquire

stronger language skills overall and provided them with richer family and social relationships. The researcher, who had worked with many of the families for previously published studies, also reported that the children who were struggling at the outset with multiple languages had been able to make significant progress over the years. Most recently, Ijalba (2016) conducted research among Hispanic mothers of ASD children living in the United States. She found that these mothers felt their differing cultural beliefs about the origins of ASD and their choices to use Spanish at home were not respected by clinicians. These mothers reported that in some situations, their desire to home-school their children was not approved of by practitioners handling their cases. The researcher recommended sensitivity training to practitioners serving Hispanic populations and encouraged them not to view parents through a deficit-based lens.

## **The Fluidity of ASD and Language Practice**

The majority of studies reviewed above report that parents are worried about BE but feel that it is important while practitioners exclusively recommend OL. However, Yu's (2013) research presents an even more complicated picture. She found in her interviews with 10 Chinese mothers who immigrated to the United States with their ASD children that language policy was never fixed and depended on a variety of factors. The researcher also noted that practitioners may not be able to spend a significant amount of time with a child and therefore tend to recommend OL because of the ASD diagnosis. However, mothers spend a majority of time with their children and, as a result, had a better awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. Mothers tended to formulate fluid language policies over time that reflected their child's gradual development and the social contexts that they found themselves in. Yu (2013) recommended that practitioners adopt this flexibility when making language recommendations to parents.

## **Section Summation**

The studies reviewed in the section above indicate that many parents fear BE could confuse their autistic children but, at the same time, realize that their children need bilingualism to cope with the demands of daily life. Some parents hope that bilingualism could bring added social and cognitive benefits. In addition, parents often want to maintain the home language as a heritage language for their children but there is tension with practitioners. Parents also mention that it is very difficult to maintain an English only environment because they do not feel their English is good enough. Finally, parents showed greater awareness than practitioners of the strengths and weaknesses of their children and shifted language policies according to the complex and fluid environments they found themselves in.

## **PRACTITIONER ROLE AND SUPPORT**

In this third strand of the literature review, studies that show the systemic constraints will be reviewed in addition to studies that demonstrate the complicated contexts in which practitioners operate, and the progress that they have made with their clients.

### **Systemic Constraints**

Parents of young children with ASD have often felt that practitioner recommendations to follow OL policies were either impractical or impossible. However, practitioners are working within an environment that is particularly constraining. Over a decade ago, research was first conducted

examining the education situations of children with developmental disabilities (DDs) who were also English language learners (ELLs). Arreaga-Mayer, Utley, Perdomo-Rivera, and Greenwood (2003) observed 36 children in 26 different class groups over a period of 213 days. The researchers reported a very complex learning environment in which teachers and support personnel, who were trained as special educators and speech and behavioral therapists but not as English as a second language (ESL) teachers, were tasked with instructing groups of children who ranged from mild to severe in their diagnoses. The researchers noted that the children received instruction exclusively in English with no home language support. In addition, they stated that only 44% of class time was spent on academic activities and the rest on life skills and behavior management. In these complex situations, which, according to this literature were the norm over the last decade, it is difficult to imagine that practitioners could have much valuable discussion with parents on language policy because they lacked the training to do so. In addition, even if practitioners wanted to develop an environment that was more supportive of the home language, resources were not readily available.

Mueller, Singer, and Carranza's (2006) study which involved the survey of 750 special education teachers working with DD children who were also ELLs reported similar findings. Of the teachers surveyed, the majority used English only in class, lacked ESL training, and did not communicate with parents about home or school language policies. However, some teachers reported that they did, on occasion, have access to support for the children in the home languages, something that connected to their satisfaction on the job. When taking into consideration these circumstances, it is not surprising that communication between parents and teacher/practitioners was not optimal. Even if practitioners had wanted to support the children's learning of home languages, there was little knowledge and few personnel to support such endeavors.

### ***Practitioner Perspectives and Recommendations Re-examined***

It is assumed that practitioners almost always recommend one language only because they think it is in the best interest of the developing child. In reality, however, the situation is much more complicated. According to practitioners, their recommendations are based on a wide variety of factors that are linked with the family, the individual child, and the level of bilingual support that can be provided. Over the past decade, services have improved greatly and there appears to be more communication between parents and practitioners, even if that communication is often fraught with problems. Interestingly, Baker (2013) reports that as a practitioner, she had always been in favor of DD children being exposed to their home language. However, in her case study of an immigrant family from India, she came to the conclusion that practitioners need to make individualized language policy recommendations and reassess them regularly. She came to this realization by watching the parents choose to adhere to an English only policy at home, followed by the reintroduction of the home language at a later stage, with significant success. Her suggestion for fellow practitioners is to maintain constant flexibility and to see each client as an individual with ever changing needs and circumstances.

### ***Solid Progress and Continuing Challenges***

Over the past decade and a half, some clear progress has been made and is reflected in three connected studies conducted last year. First, a group of researchers examined six therapeutic and special education sites in the US, Canada, the UK, and Holland (Marinova-Todd, Colozzo, Mirenda, Stahl, Bird, Parkington, & Genesse, 2016). In a survey of 361 practitioners affiliated with these sites, the researchers uncovered a disconnect between practice and personal opinion. They found that the majority of respondents to their survey believed that children on both the mild and the severe end of the autism spectrum were capable of learning two languages to varying degrees.

However, many problems needed to be overcome in order to support the children and their families. These problems include a lack of qualified personnel to work with the children and a lack of testing available in multiple languages. The researchers identified a wide gap between current practice and professional opinion and believe that what had previously been written based on parent report needs to be reassessed. While parents report OL recommendations made by practitioners, they may not always have understood the rationale behind the suggestion, and practitioners may not have had time to reassess situations or make detailed, nuanced recommendations to parents.

Pesco, MacLeod, Bird, Cleaver, Trudeau and de Valenzuela (2016) also collected data at the same six sites as Marinova-Todd et al. (2016) during the same period to add to the emerging picture. Rather than surveying practitioners, they conducted observation of policies at the sites. They found that, officially, the sites favored inclusion and language planning based on individual needs but second language learning was rarely discussed explicitly in the site literature or among administrators. Second language support varied according to the site.

de Valenzuela, Bird and Parkington, (2016) conducted one final study on the same six sites in the four countries and found that special education was prioritized over language education. In addition, time and scheduling conflicts were reported to confound support in a second language and limited personnel and resources were available. In contrast to parents who tended to interpret practitioners as being staunchly OL, practitioners reported that they were prone to leave family planning decisions up to the individual parents. They were also in support of the development of further programs to help maintain and develop the child's two languages.

## **Section Summation**

It is clear from the published literature that until very recently, the majority of practitioners were working under challenging conditions with a wide range of DD students and clients and they were not always qualified to make recommendations to parents about home and school language policy. In addition, they suffered from a lack of resources. Currently, the situation seems to have improved. Preliminary research has been conducted that indicated bilingualism is a possibility for children with ASD and this research may have played a role in shifting practitioner perspectives. However, most practitioners likely continue to recommend OL, mainly because of a lack of second language support.

## **CONCLUSION**

Inquiry into autism and bilingualism is still in its infant stages. Over the past two decades, researchers have begun to establish that BE does not cause additional difficulty to verbal people on the spectrum and may even enhance their linguistic, cognitive, and social repertoires of skills. Parents have expressed mixed feelings on one-language policies recommended by practitioners. On the one hand, they have expressed the opinion that they fear BE may be confusing or prohibitively difficult. On the other hand, they hope for the benefits associated with bilingualism. Parents have also stated that oftentimes, bilingualism is not a choice because the external environment demands it or because parents are not proficient enough in the target language (usually English) to be able to provide a monolingual home environment. Finally, in contrast to the much-repeated line that practitioners consistently recommend OL, practitioners themselves have stated that their personal opinions do not often correspond with their professional recommendations to parents. This is due to the limited amount of time they have with each of their clients and also due to a lack of resources to support bilingual therapy and education. All researchers have called for further studies to strengthen findings. Over the past two years, several doctoral theses have been published on bilingual adults with autism. It is hoped that future researchers will be able to strengthen some of these findings and

fill in some of the extant gaps.

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