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Introduction

We are pleased to offer the inaugural issue of the Kobe JALT Journal, aimed to provide a forum for our membership to share ideas, stay current with research in the field, get professional advice, and keep up to date with chapter events and news. We hope that that our members will find the Journal useful and encourage contributions and participation from all of you.

In this inaugural issue, we are pleased to offer two exciting research articles, both of which explore the place of online or digital technology in the EFL classroom in Japan. Fuad Olajuwon offers a pilot study into online cloze exercises in eikawa classrooms that can be practically adapted in many situations. Robert Sheridan & Alex Stanciu also offer a look a digital technologies in their studies of e-readers in extensive reading programs. We believe that the research presented here will not only give practical hints to our membership but also provide exciting avenues for future research projects.

This issue also includes a discussion of what makes a successful academic presentation submission by John Rucynski. Whether you are just beginning to make academic presentations or if you are a seasoned presenter, the advice in this column is worth reading for us all.

Our issue closes out with Kathryn M. Tanaka's classroom exercise on how to help students learn academic writing by visualizing the structure of the paper as a *dango*, and Armando Duarte's summary of recent Kobe JALT events.

We are excited to share this journal with you and look forward to receiving your future contributions and seeing you at future Kobe JALT events. We would also like to thank our peer reviewers, who were involved in the double-blind review of our research articles. We would further like to thank our authors and membership. We look forward to developing this journal with you.

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Cloze Techniques in Self-Accessed Language Learning Contexts: A Review of Clozemaster and Apps4EFL

Fuad Olajuwon

President of Saitama JALT

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the efficacy of cloze testing in Self-Accessed Language Learning (SALL) platforms within the online applications Clozemaster and Apps4EFL. Through encouraging students to find answers to cloze questions by using prior knowledge of linguistic instruction, L2 learners utilize critical thinking and personal motivation in achieving desired outcomes (Carter, 1999; Gremmo & Riley, 1995; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Utilizing an assortment of online-based programs as a supplement for comprehensive language learning, students can develop linguistic prowess while strengthening their command of L2 expressions. For educators, usage of these tools can be an asset to overall classroom instruction as well as promote elements of self-study. By assisting students in developing ways on “how” to think, rather than simply “what” to think, L2 learners can use these strategies to help facilitate their language retention and development.

本論の目的は、自己アクセス言語学習（SALL）でのクローズテストの有効性を紹介する。言語学習の予備知識を使って答えを見つけるように生徒を励ますことを通して、L2 学習者は望ましい結果を達成する際に批判的思考と個人的な動機を利用する(Carter, 1999; Gremmo & Riley, 1995; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990)。包括的な語学学習の補足として、さまざまなオンラインベースのプログラムを活用することで、生徒は言語能力を伸ばしながら L2 表現の実行を強化することができる。教育者にとっては、これらのツールを使用することは、自習の要素を促進するだけでなく、教室での全般的な指導にとって重要になります。単なる「考える」よりもむしろ「どのように」考えるかについての方法を開発することで学生を援助することによって、L2 学習者は彼らの言語保持と発達を促進するのを助けるのにそのような方法を使うことができる。

Keywords: Apps4EFL; Clozemaster; cloze testing; interactive media; self-accessed language learning

Interactive Media and the Impact on Language Study

With the rise of technology, a number of online language learning programs can be used to develop linguistic patterns for L2 learners (Gee, 2005; Mubarak & Smith, 2008). Through Self-Accessed Language Learning (SALL), students can practice outside of the classroom, reinforcing different language learning patterns, linguistic frames of reference, as well as grammatical structuring and syntax necessary to develop language skills. Online methods, such as internet language programs and learning management systems (LMS), can act as a platform to provide supplementary material for L2 learners, exposing students to an assortment of educational formats. This can further diversify language instruction, allowing for instances of novelty and fun to apply to the overall learning experience. For educators, many programs have algorithms that can help distribute assignments, expand educational curriculum and monitor the overall progress of students, resembling the functions of more “traditional” means of instruction. Through increasing learner autonomy in the form of interactive cloze techniques combined with modern methods of study, we can supplement language expedients outside of classroom settings.

Educational Importance

When using these online platforms, it is essential to highlight their advantages while recognizing some of the potential pitfalls of this technology within the educational framework. Through internet cloze testing, educators can supplement online materials with regular classroom instruction, which can aid the student in developing language proficiency through using a multitude of critical thinking skills. With Clozemaster and the Apps4EFL programs specifically, teachers can measure student progression through the applications by actively examining which patterns learners of various levels

find challenging. This method of evaluation allows educators to calibrate online lessons to accommodate the unique needs of students.

When examining such methods of interactive media platforms, it is crucial to recognize how these curricular paradigms influence the language learning process as well as the efficacy of using the methodologies when compared to other educative procedures. Through using cloze techniques, students can increase vocabulary and readability within an L2 language paradigm (McCray & Brunfaut, 2016; Taylor, 1953). Additionally, learners with a beginner, intermediate, or advanced level of language proficiency all benefit from cloze testing. Such a tool reinforces the idea of “interlaying” language, which can aid in the cultivation of L2 linguistic protocols via the utilization of interlingual proficiencies (Stathopoulou, 2016). Through exposure to various types of linguistic patterns, students have the opportunity to bolster and recognize syntactical sequences within an L2 framework (Hanzeli, 1977).

Self-Accessed Language Learning Applications: Clozemaster and Apps4EFL

In order to demonstrate the efficacy of cloze testing, this paper takes up two specific examples of online tools, Clozemaster and Apps4EFL. With Clozemaster, students have the opportunity to practice with an assortment of English sentences in different contexts. For example, learners have to choose the correct answer from either a list of words (multiple choice) or by manually inputting the right choice in a blank space listed in the question. Afterwards, the program algorithms will determine whether the answer is acceptable, by immediately counting the reply as right or wrong. Generally, questions are given out in a set of 10 (see Figure 1), which is considered one “round” of questioning, in which the student can continue to practice or finish their session. For this program, the cloze sentences come from another website called Tatoeba (2019), which is an open-source database of translated syntax released under a creative commons license.

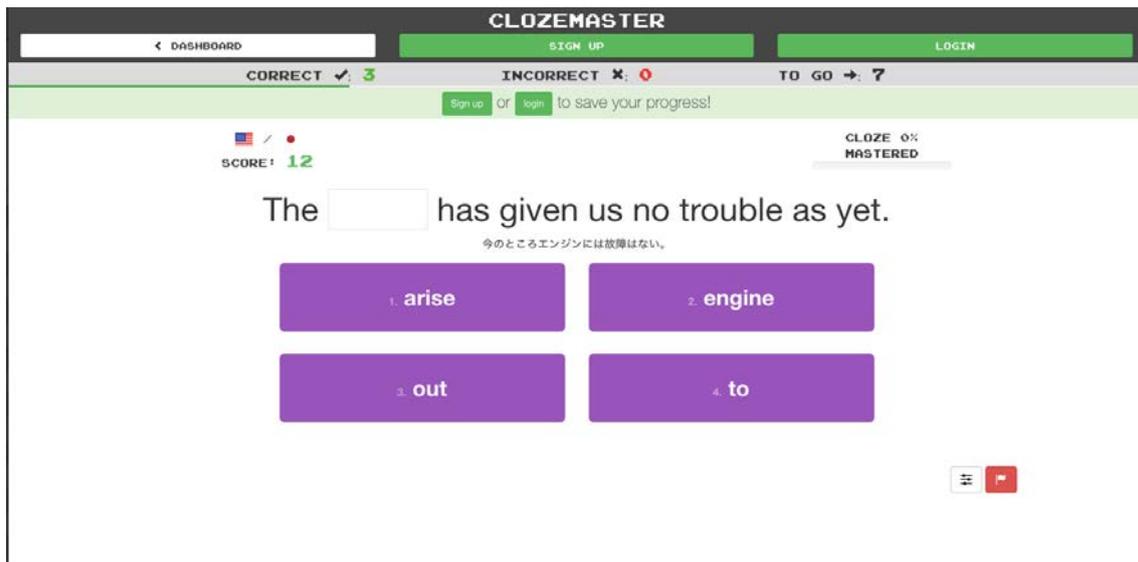


Figure 1. Clozemaster interface with set of questions

After signing up for the free program, students can track their progress and even save problems that are especially difficult to understand (Clozemaster, 2019). The interface of Clozemaster even has an optional feature that contacts the student via email to ensure that practice on the platform occurs daily (see Figure 2). This sort of system assists in creating a sense of systematic instruction with the L2 language outside of the classroom setting by providing users with an assortment of practice sentences accessible through the program. Based on the origins of where both programs derive their respective syntax, the type of sentences a student will see may vary. As an educator, you can instruct students to focus on a small set of sentences within the program or allow them to select difficulty levels of their own choosing. In Clozemaster, lower level students can choose to work on the “100 most frequently used words” in English or choose to advance to larger word sets. However, the overall premise of cloze testing remains within the established linguistic parameters of the programs, giving learners a chance to use language in a practical way that focuses on teaching vocabulary and syntax in a within a contextual framework.

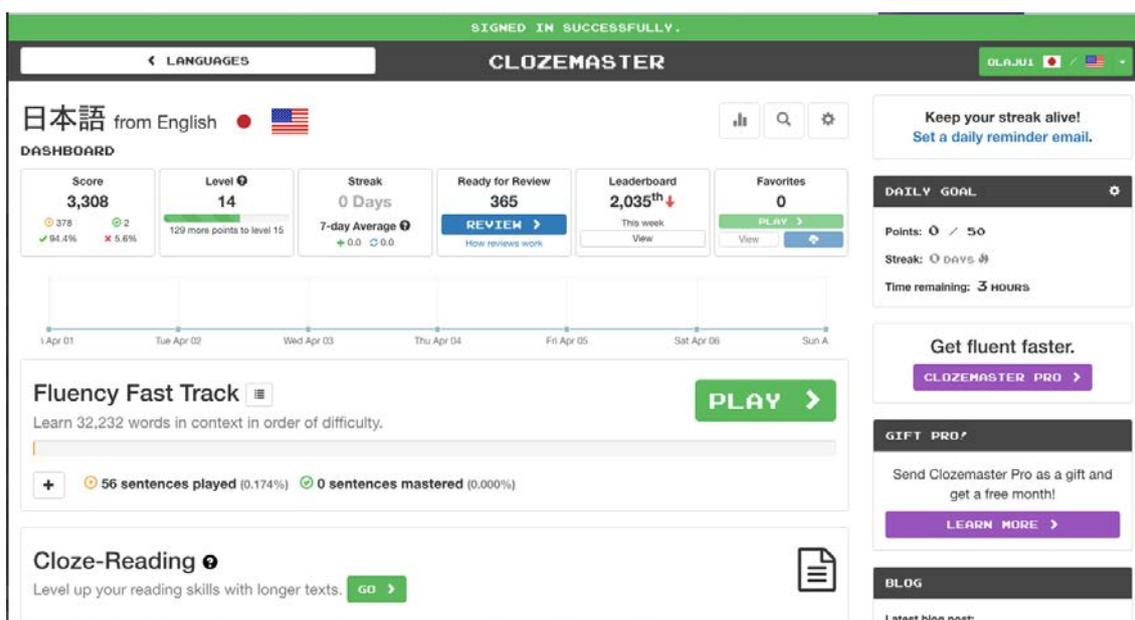


Figure 2. Student dashboard after creating account

Apps4EFL: Methodologies and Approaches to Language Study

Apps4EFL works similarly to Clozemaster in that it tests learner ability to understand language patterns through linguistic references. Like Clozemaster, it is free to sign up for both educators and students when they register using their e-mail, but does not send any messages to individual users. However, Apps4EFL derives their respective cloze sentences from a multitude of sources such as from YouTube, Wikipedia, and TED Talks. Apps4EFL offers an assortment of different practicing methods, such as the Gap Fill and Text-to-Test applications (Raine, 2019) (see Figure 3). Gap Fill resembles the algorithm found in general exercises regarding contextual evaluation, where students have to fill in the correct answer missing in the sentence (see Figure 4). L2 learners also have the option of selecting media of interest from an assortment of platforms (such as YouTube, TED Talks and the like) or the prescribed material already found in the program. Learners have the opportunity to choose which form of interactive study best suits their level, as well as individually determine whether the online programs coincide with the overall curriculum being taught. The Gap Fill

program is an example of this idea, which permits the learner to take the original work from other online sources and input the data into writing columns in the application. This process becomes that material that is primarily used to create a sample cloze test.



Figure 3. Apps4EFL homepage

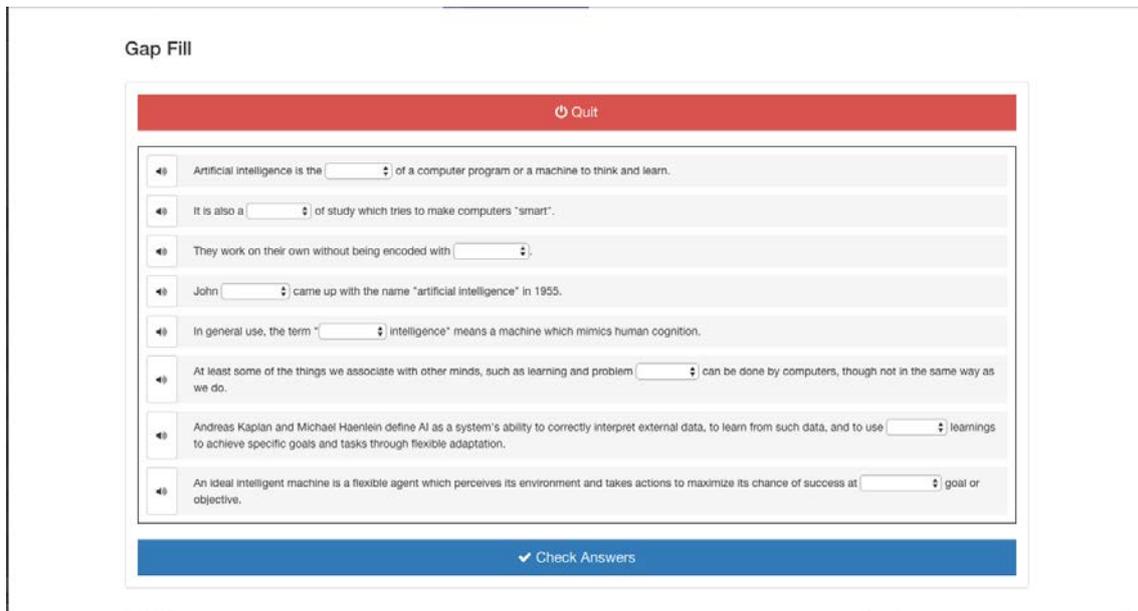


Figure 4. Apps4EFL Gap Fill utilizing cloze testing techniques

Text-to-Test Within a Linguistic Context

The Text-to-Test model operates similarly, except this program functions as a paper examination, where students can print out the material for studying purposes or educators can utilize the methods to create an in-class evaluation. While Text-to-Test has effectiveness that is similar to the interactive cloze model, the methodological approach seems to function appositely to more orthodox classroom teaching (see Figure 5). Overall, both the Gap Fill and the Text-to-Test platforms help to reinforce each other.

From these quizzing styles, the student can maximize the customization of the testing, creating a linguistic experience catered to the needs of the individual. This idea exemplifies the notion of learner-centered EFL, which emphasizes language learning autonomy (Karajeva, 2001; Wenden, 1991). For educators, assignments can be given to L2 learners based on personal education approaches, accomplishing the general objectives of the SALL paradigm. Through the utilization of these cloze programs combined with interactive media, students can maximize their studying capabilities outside of the classroom (See Figure 6).

The screenshot shows a 'Cloze Test' interface with five numbered sentences and a word bank. The sentences are:

- So I ¹ data can ² make us ³ human.
- We're collecting ¹ creating all ² of data ³ how we're ⁴ our lives, ⁵ it's enabling ⁶ ⁷ to tell ⁸ amazing stories.
- Recently, a ¹ media theorist ² "The 19th ³ culture was ⁴ by the ⁵ the ⁶ 20th ⁷ culture was ⁸ by the ⁹ and the ¹⁰ of the ¹¹ century will ¹² defined by ¹³ interface.
- " And ¹ believe this ² going to ³ true.
- Our lives ¹ being driven ² data, and ³ presentation of ⁴ data is ⁵ opportunity for ⁶ to ⁷ make ⁸ amazing interfaces ⁹ tell great ¹⁰

The word bank at the bottom contains the following words: novel, I, wise, actually, is, think, more, living, the, century, are, defined, kinds, us, Tweeted., defined, us, some, be, prove, the, and, that, about, by, cinema, some, 21st, that, an, culture, and, stories, century.

Figure 5. Text-To-Test model with printable format

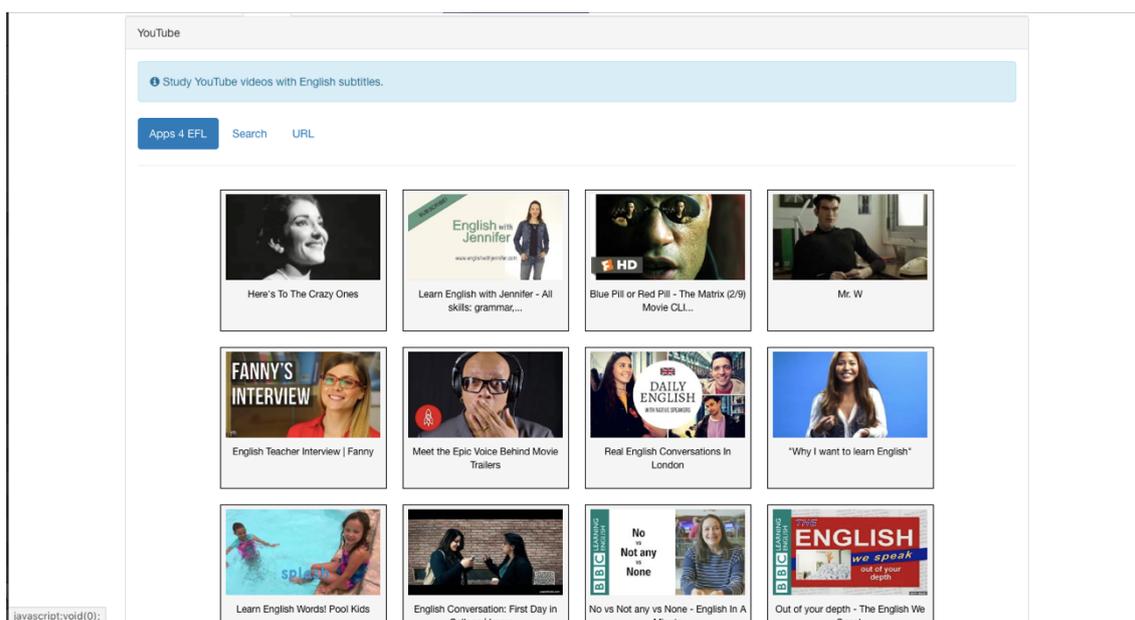


Figure 6. Various forms of media found within Apps4EFL

Limiting Factors Within Cloze Learning Paradigms

Despite the positive aspects of internet cloze testing, there are a few identifiable drawbacks that need to be recognized when using interactive programs. Firstly, there is a lack of direct feedback regarding the implementation of speaking practices. While students have the opportunity to “shadow” the audio from the cloze questions, there is a gap in understanding whether or not their spoken language is coherent enough to facilitate “smooth” conversation. Additionally, even though learners can go to the classroom and interact directly with language teachers, it is paramount to emphasize that online platforms are merely a supplement to language instruction instead of an all-encompassing language learning methodology. Regarding cloze testing, without proper reference to the material at hand, educators run the risk of underutilizing the potential of the assessment methods. Through the utilization of such online language platforms, there is the potential for missed connections in terms of producing the L2 language outside of a controlled format (Thornbury, 2017). Additionally, a language instructor can help students find appropriate level cloze items in case the

student is not sure what action to take outside of the classroom. Although such methods can affect the development of contextualized linguistic understanding, reliance on cloze orthodoxies extends to cultivating knowledge within a particular examination framework (Brown, 2013). As pointed out by Alderson (1979), much of cloze testing can be viewed from the theoretical lens of “producing for the tests” rather than retaining language knowledge. This idea is also echoed in the second disadvantage of such online programs, which is the lack of guidance from educators assisting in the production of linguistic capability outside of the testing software (Yudintseva, 2015). Without proper curricular direction from teachers, students may feel overwhelmed if there is not a proper rubric present to aid in understanding the progression of the linguistic material. With SALL based platitudes, there is a level of autonomy required to follow the language learning protocols asked of students (Klassen, Detaramani, Lui, Patri, & Wu, 1998).

Lastly, sometimes the translations provided in the software coding itself have a few miscues, which can be rectified by sending a report to the moderators. This does take time, however, and it can be demotivating for some students who feel as though the answer provided was correct, only to have it counted as wrong due to online algorithms not picking up the contextual syntax. From a subjectivity standpoint, without the input from the educator, the language learning process may warrant antithetical results from the original purpose of introducing SALL curriculum (Ge, 1990; Yang, 1990). These examples highlight a few of the advantages and disadvantages when supplementing internet cloze testing with traditional classroom instruction.

Through the nature of using cloze techniques in language learning, students engage in SALL-based initiatives that assist in developing significant linguistic acquisition and retention. As Paul Raine pointed out in his study (2017), the gamification of language learning through online platforms can have a positive effect with students, creating an environment that allows for a different approach to learning. As a result, the internet cloze tests can help to create a sense of personal

motivation within L2 learners, allowing students to take more responsibility for their learning by individualization of learning speed and curricular selection (Gremmo & Riley, 1995; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). This methodology is especially apparent in Apps4EFL, which has an assortment of customization options that allows the student to take full control of their supplemental learning, which has been shown to improve user morale in terms of the participating in the language learning process (Garcia, 2013).

Student Trials using Clozemaster and Apps4EFL: An Eikaiwa Case Study

Utilizing both online programs such as Clozemaster and Apps4EFL in my classroom resulted in an interesting set of results. To test the effectiveness of using cloze techniques, a total of 15 students participated in this qualitative experiment over 3 months. I assigned a daily activity online, by issuing homework through the program interface for a total of 7 activities each week. For Clozemaster, I was able to check the students' progress since there is a calendar option that showcases how often students participated in the program. Regarding Apps4EFL, there is a special login section for educators that can check the progress of students registered within the platform.

The participants in the classes varied in age range (with the youngest being 17 years of age up to 65 years of age) and all shared the experience studying in an *eikaiwa* environment. Origins of this particular study emerged from a few of my students who expressed their concern regarding their progress. All of the respondents in the experiment came to my class once a week for approximately 60 minutes and mentioned that they did not (other than homework assigned for the next session) study English outside of the classroom. These online tools, then, served to bridge a gap in student progress in several ways.

Firstly, the online programs allowed me to check their progress by monitoring the completion percentages in their profiles (in the case of Clozemaster), or by checking the completed assignments issued out during the class session (in Apps4EFL). Overall, the purpose of the study was

to demonstrate which students were dedicated to spending time outside of class studying their L2 language. Out of the 15 students involved in the study, 5 would do every assignment allocated by me without question, often within the same day. The students tended to be around the same age group, while the male was the youngest participant in the study. The information regarding the students are as follows:

Note: Names have been changed

Students who completed each online lesson assigned

Female Participants

Ayako W. – age 36

Toshimi S. – age 41

Yumiko S. – age 35

Mai K. – age 32

Male Participants

Jun Yeok K. – age 17

According to self-reporting from the participants who completed their assignments, 80% would finish the homework while commuting, while 20% of students preferred using PC. Overall, these students continued to practice using online platforms even after the study was completed. The next group of students involved in the experiment completed most of the assignments, but did not work on them every day. The individuals that make up this selection are as follows:

Students who completed some of the online lessons assigned

Female Participants

Kana S. – age 32

Yuri T. – age 40

Yumiko I. – age 53

Soon Yi L. – age 45

Ryoko K. – age 51

Male Participants

Toshiharu S. – age 44

Hidekazu O. – age 47

In this group, 57% of students would complete 5 or more assignments in a week, while 22%

would complete 4-5 per week. 21% of students ended up finishing 1-3 problem sets in a week. Finally, the last set of participants didn't complete any assignments at all. Even after receiving constant reminders, the students seemed to be interested primarily in taking the once-a-week lessons without using the online programs. The participants in this group are as follows:

Students who didn't complete any of the online lessons

Female Participants

Satomi N. – age 33

Mie O. – age 21

Male Participants

Masa T. – age 45

As mentioned before, this particular study was conducted in my *eikaiwa* classes among a total of 15 students. These classes were conducted on a one-on-one basis and I would see all 15 students once within a course of a week.

Limitations and Takeaways from this Study

When monitoring the reception of the online programs Clozemaster and Apps4EFL, it became apparent that the individuals who expressed the most interest in increasing their linguistic progress were the students who were most active in using the platforms outside of the classroom. Three of the participants (Ayako W., Toshimi S., and Yumiko S.) were especially pleased with Clozemaster and continued to practice each day after the conclusion of the study. These three students had goals of increasing their speaking and sought had programs that focused on contextual syntax. The other active students (Mai K. and Jun Yeok K.) had goals of passing language examinations to attend university (graduate school in the case of Mai K. and university in South Korea for Jun Yeok K.). This data coincides with the work of Ryuko Kubota (2011), which presented the idea that the effectiveness of an *eikaiwa* environment correlated with the goals of students. If learners in question have clear, measurable objectives in terms of language progress, persistence towards such objectives causes students to utilize tools necessary for achievement. This fact is apparent across various age brackets

and genders, as the students most interested in the online platforms had a clear, self-identified reason for using the programs.

Some of the other students continued to practice sporadically (Yuri T. and Toshiharu S.) but soon dropped off, stating that the material was too monotonous (in the case of Toshiharu S.) or it became difficult to maintain consistent practice (Yuri T.). These opinions were expressed for both Clozemaster and AppsEFL. The other students decided to not continue with the program after the 3-month trials concluded, due to a lack of interest in continuing the usage of the applications, as well as trouble with keeping up with the daily assignments.

The limitations of this study include the limited number of students and the rather short time of the experiment. Additionally, a raw assessment of ability from the beginning to the end of the study is missing, which can present a complex evaluation as to whether the students in fact achieved a substantial increase in linguistic progress. At the same time, the paucity of research into effective eikawa teaching tools make this study an important contribution to the field despite its significant limitations, and point to intriguing new directions for further research.

In conclusion, the individuals who expressed their concern regarding their progress in the L2 language had the opportunity to use online programs to help facilitate classroom instruction. Through SALL protocols, students were encouraged to take steps to further their language development by completing the daily assignments issued by the educator. By conducting the trials, we discovered which learners were interested in using the online programs and which were satisfied with lessons once per week. Students who had measurable goals sought to gain as much practice as possible with the online programs, while other students seemed to be interested in a casual learning speed. Ultimately, the programs Clozemaster and Apps4EFL clicked with learners who were looking for extra work outside of the classroom setting.

Language Supplementation Going Forward

Overall, cloze testing within a SALL based context can provide practical study imperatives when combined with traditional methods of language instruction. Through the frequency of practice with online tools such as Clozemaker and APPS4EFL, students can substantially augment study regimens with material directly catered to more autonomous means of linguistic development (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). These programs can help to present another aspect of the L2 learning process to students looking for alternatives to more conventional means of language acquisition. While orthodox means of instruction over a period of time can warrant positive learning results, supplementation of other forms of language directions can be a net benefit to students pursuing linguistic competency. If educators can promote learning outside of the classroom with SALL platforms that are interactive, measurable and fun, learners can utilize programs such as online cloze testing to facilitate language retention and development.

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Extensive Reading in a Digital Age: Comparing how Paper-based and Electronic Graded Readers Influence Language Gains and Interest

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A large body of research over the last few decades has shown that extensive reading (ER) is effective in providing L2 learners with large amounts of comprehensible input that serves to improve language learning. Until recent years, ER programs have primarily used paper-based graded readers; however, as technology changes reading habits, there has been a recent shift to electronic graded readers. Despite the increasing availability of electronic graded readers, little research has been done into their efficacy as a platform for ER. In light of this gap in the research, this exploratory study of 84 Japanese university students from two separate levels compares the effects of electronic and paper-based graded readers on vocabulary acquisition, student interest in ER and their motivation to increase the amount they read. Overall, through quantitative and qualitative analysis, we demonstrate that electronic books might help increase student interest in graded reading at lower proficiency levels; however, students at this same level might be motivated to read more when assigned paper-based graded readers. Our study also reveals that the majority of students in both level groups feel that ER is a valuable and enjoyable method by which to improve their language ability. These findings are of special interest to L2 educators, curriculum designers and advocates for the implementation of ER programs in EFL curricula.

この数十年の間にわたる大規模な調査により、L2 学習者に対して言語学習の改善に役立つ大量の理解可能な言語修得するには、多読（ER）が効果的であることが示されている。近年まで、ER プログラムは主に紙ベースのグレイディッド・リーダーを使用していた。しかし、テクノロジーが読書習慣を変えるにつれて、最近電子書籍へ移行した。電子書籍の可用性が向上しているにもかかわらず、ER のプラットフォームとしての有効性に関する研究はほとんど行われていない。この研究のギャップを超えるために、パイロット・スタディを行い、84 人の日本人の大学生を二つの違うレベルのクラスによって、紙か電子書籍を利用し語彙修得、学生の興味、読書量のモチベーションを比較する。全体的に定量的および定性的分析を通じて、電子書籍は英語力の低い学生の関心を高めることに貢献するが、紙の本であればより読書量のモチベーションが高まるということを実証した。また、本論はどちらのレベルであっても、学生は英語力を高めるために ER が貴重で親しみやすい方法だと思われることを明らかにする。本論の調査結果は英語の教員カリキュラム・デザイン担当者および EFL における ER プログラムを推進する者にはとくに役に立つ。

Keywords: electronic and paper-based books; extensive reading; interest; vocabulary acquisition

A vast amount of research over the past several decades has provided overwhelming evidence of the positive relationship between extensive reading (ER) and L2 language learning. Previous studies have shown that ER supports the acquisition of new vocabulary and the enhancement of already-known vocabulary (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Waring & Takaki, 2003), overall improvements in reading comprehension (Elley, 1991; Shiki, 2011; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007) and improvements in reading fluency (Beglar, Hunt & Kite, 2012; Brown, 2000; Huffman, 2014).

While the definition of ER has been defined in numerous ways over the years, one often-cited definition is that “[e]xtensive reading is an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot

of easy material in a new language” (Day and Bamford, 2004, p.1). As for its impact on overall language learning, Scrivener (2011, p.265) writes that “the more someone reads, the more they pick up items of vocabulary and grammar from the texts, often without realizing it, and this widening language knowledge seems to increase their overall linguistic confidence, which then influences and improves their skills in other language areas, too.”

Teachers themselves, while often aware of the well-established benefits of ER on language development, sometimes struggle to spark an interest, and maintain motivation, for their students to eagerly participate in a program of ER. Research on how to generate and sustain interest among participants in an ER program has led to several well-established guidelines for teachers to refer to when first incorporating ER into their classrooms. Bamford and Day (2002) provide a number of such guidelines, including: (1) reading material should be easy, (2) a variety of reading materials, covering a wide range of topics, should be available, (3) learners should have autonomy in choosing the materials they want to read.

ER has typically consisted of students going to a library, searching for an appropriate book, checking out the book and engaging in the physical process of reading the book. Although traditionally these books would be paper-based or hardcover, society as a whole is witnessing a general shift towards electronic delivery of information and media. Many people subscribe to digital media on news or SNS sites, regularly download the latest editions of their favorite magazines, or enjoy reading books on their e-readers. For those of us teaching tertiary-level students, students who are now so-called “digital natives,” we are dealing with a group of individuals for whom swiping, scrolling, and tapping is often more familiar than page-turning. Such digital natives are often more comfortable accessing information in digital format rather than by turning pages in a book or magazine. Additionally, electronic textbooks are gaining popularity at the primary and secondary levels in school districts around the world, which will lead to a further increase in familiarity with digital media as opposed to

paper-based, or traditional, media among our students (Milliner & Cote, 2015).

Walker conducted a study in 2018 looking at eight EFL courses over two years at two different universities, in which both paper-based and screen-based media were introduced as components of a supplementary extensive reading program. The results revealed that when students were asked for their preference of medium, the majority indicated a preference for screen-based rather than paper-based reading. On the other hand, Tagane, Naganuma, and Dougherty (2018), as part of an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) advanced reading curriculum at a Japanese university, set out to examine whether students' perceptions of extensive reading differed based on the medium, and found that in general those students who participated in the paper-based extensive reading program reported more positive experiences and assigned higher value to extensive reading compared to those who participated in online reading.

Building on studies of perception, and given the well-established benefits of ER in language development, as well as the general trend in society toward digital content, we set out to research whether we could identify any quantitative and/or qualitative benefits of using an electronic content ER platform (Xreading) versus a traditional paper-based method. Although much research has substantiated the benefits of traditional ER using paper-based books, research into comparing specific L2 gains across the two platforms is still in its infancy. We were interested in determining whether one medium of reading was superior to another in (1) improving students' interest in extensive reading, (2) increasing vocabulary acquisition, and (3) motivating students to read more. To this end, the following research questions were investigated:

1. Do L2 learners express greater interest in electronic graded readers compared to paper-based graded readers?
2. Do electronic graded readers improve L2 vocabulary retention and help to motivate learners to read more?

Methodology

Participants

A total of 84 second-year university students (37 intermediate, 47 pre-intermediate; 37 female, 47 male) from four intact elective EFL classes participated in the study. All of the participants were native Japanese L1 speakers majoring in agriculture at a private university in western Japan. Of the four intact classes, two were intermediate-level classes and the other two were pre-intermediate classes. The students were divided into these two levels based on their performance on a TOEIC Bridge placement test administered by the school at the end of their first year. Students who achieved a score of 140 or higher were placed in an intermediate-level class while the students who scored between 130 and 139 were assigned to a pre-intermediate-level class. Students who scored 129 or lower were placed in a basic-level class; however, these students did not participate in this study. For this study, one class from each of the two levels was assigned to the electronic graded reader group (E-group) and the other was placed in the paper-based graded reader group (P-group). All four of the classes were taught by the two researchers.

At the onset of the study, all of the students took the New General Service List test (NGSLT; Stoeckel & Bennett, 2015). This test was used to determine each individual participant's initial vocabulary knowledge of the high-frequency words found on the New General Service List (NGSL; Browne, Culligan & Phillips, 2013) and to ensure that the E- and P-groups at each level were equivalent in terms of beginning vocabulary knowledge. This was important since the assignments in the study were electronic or paper-based graded readers whose levels are determined based on lexical and grammatical difficulty. The mean NGSLT score for the intermediate-level students in the E-group was 81.44 ($n = 18$), and for the P-Group it was 78.42 ($n = 19$). A one-way analysis of variance was

conducted to evaluate the relationship between the NGSLT scores of the two groups. The ANOVA was non-significant, $F(1, 35) = 1.69, p = .22$. The mean NGSLT score for the pre-intermediate-level students in the E-group was 74.08 ($n = 25$), and for the P-group it was 72.64 ($n = 22$). A one-way analysis of variance was also conducted to compare the relationship between the NGSLT scores of the two groups. This ANOVA was also non-significant, $F(1, 45) = 0.64, p = .43$.

Based on these results, we can consider the intermediate-level E- and P-groups and the pre-intermediate E- and P-groups equivalent in terms of their initial vocabulary knowledge. Table 1 shows the results of the NGSLT and details of the four groups.

Table 1. Group Data

Level	Electronic Graded Reader Groups	Paper-based Graded Reader Groups
Intermediate	18 participants (13 female, 5 male) Mean NGSLT score: 81.44 ($n = 18$)	19 participants (10 female, 9 male) Mean NGSLT score: 78.42 ($n = 19$)
Pre-intermediate	25 participants (6 female, 19 male) Mean NGSLT score: 74.08 ($n = 25$)	22 participants (8 female, 14 male) Mean NGSLT score: 72.64 ($n = 22$)

Instruments

Paper-based Graded Readers

Participants in the P-group read paper-based graded readers which they selected and borrowed from the university's library. The students were able to choose from 1255 graded readers from several different ELT publishers. The books ranged in difficulty from level Starter (S) to level 6. Because of the limited number of books available, students were asked not to borrow more than one book at a time. Students were allowed to borrow the book from the library for up to two weeks.

Electronic Graded Readers

Participants in the E-group read graded readers online through a virtual library, Xreading VL (n.d.),

using a smartphone, tablet or computer. The students had access to over 800 graded readers from eleven ELT publishers at any time, and they did not have to worry about the book they wanted to read being checked out by another student. The levels of books ranged from S to 12 for the publishers' books, Starter to High-advance for the Xreading/ERF books and A to X+ for the EPER books. Most of the books also had an audio component, so the students in the E-group were able to listen to the book while they read. Table 2 shows the total participants who used this audio feature as well as the mean and median times of how long these participants used it for over the course of study.

Table 2. E-group Participants Who Used the Listening Feature and the Details of Their Usage

Level	Total Participants	Participants who Used Listening Feature	Mean Listening Time	Median Listening Time
Pre- intermediate	25	13	2h 14m 30s	50m 29s
Intermediate	18	11	4h 29m 26s	2h 46m 37s

Note. Participants who used the listening feature for a total of less than 5 minutes were not included.

Comprehension tests to verify books were read

After students completed their electronic or paper-based book, they were required to take a comprehension quiz for the book in order to get credit for the words they read. All of the comprehension quizzes for both groups were the same as they were created by Mreader. The students in the E-group were able to take the Mreader quizzes on the Xreading VL platform right after finishing

the book, whereas the students in the P-group had to take the quizzes through the Mreader (n.d.; Today, 2019) website. There were more than 6000 quizzes available, and in this study there were very few incidents where there was no relevant quiz. Each quiz consisted of 10 items randomly generated from a test bank which included 20–30 items for each book, so each student would receive a different 10-item quiz to reduce any potential for cheating. All of the students had 15 minutes to complete the quiz. If the students achieved a score of 60% or higher on the quiz, they were given credit for reading the book and its word count. If a student did not pass the test, the teachers allowed them to try again. The students were responsible for contacting the teacher to reset the quiz if they wanted to attempt the quiz again. In the event that there was no quiz available for the book, the teacher orally quizzed the student on the book and gave the student credit for the words read if they believed the student had completed the book.

New General Service List Test

All of the participants took the 100-item NGSLT in the first and last lessons of the course to evaluate their knowledge of high-frequency vocabulary before and after using the graded readers. Students were told their result of the initial vocabulary test to help them select level-appropriate graded readers. Students were also told their score on the exit test.

Survey to gauge interest

In order to gauge student interest, students were given a two-question bilingual survey at the end of the fourteenth class to complete for homework. The survey included one 6-point Likert scale survey question of “How interested were you in reading English (e) books in this class this semester? (この学期にこの授業で英語の(電子書籍)本を読むことにどれくらい興味がありましたか?)” (1 not interested at all; 6 very interested) and a follow-up question of “Why do you think so? Please

explain your answer below(なぜそう思いますか？下記にあなたの答えを説明してください。)”

Research Design and Procedure

The design of this study, as shown in Table 3, was comparative between the electronic graded reader groups (E-group) and the paper-based graded reader groups (P-group) at intermediate and pre-intermediate levels. As part of a 15-week elective EFL course, the intermediate-level students were required to read at least 60,000 words and the pre-intermediate-level students 50,000 words. In the first class, all of the participants took the NGSLT. After completing this test, students from both groups were given a handout (Koch, 2012) written in their L1 explaining the benefits of Extensive Reading (Appendix A) along with the following simple four rules:

1. Choose books you want to read
2. Read easy books
3. Read fun books
4. Read as much as possible.

Following this, the teachers took the students from the P-group to the library to show them where the graded readers were kept and explain book levels, headwords and word counts. The students were asked to select one level-appropriate book and bring it to the next class as they would be given 15 minutes of class time to start reading it then.

For the E-group students, their second class was held in a computer room. Students were given instructions on how to log in to and navigate the website, including how to select appropriate books based on the book's level and the number of headwords and total words. The E-group students were given 30 minutes to get accustomed to the website, select a book and start reading. Besides the time both groups spent doing ER in the second class, ER was implemented outside of class as an assignment.

Table 3. Description of the Groups and Tasks Assigned to Each Group

Level	Group	Type of Books Read	Word Count Goal	Type of Comprehension Test Taken	Extra Assignments
Pre-intermediate	E	ebooks on xreading.com	50000	Mreader quizzes on xreading.com	5 written book reports
	P	Paper-based books from Library	50000	Mreader quizzes on mreader.org	5 written book reports
Intermediate	E	ebooks on xreading.com	60000	Mreader quizzes on xreading.com	5 written book reports
	P	Paper-based books from Library	60000	Mreader quizzes taken on mreader.org	5 written book reports

To help encourage students to read at a consistent pace throughout the course, five book reports were assigned; one report every third week (in weeks 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15) with the out-of-class ER task and book report assignments being worth 40 percent of the students' overall grade. For each book report, students were required to write a summary of the story in at least 10 complete sentences as well as give two reasons why they liked or disliked the book in at least five sentences. Each book report was done for homework and then presented in small groups of three or four people in class. During this book report presentation activity, students were also required to write the title, a short summary and two questions about their groupmates' books. This style of report seemed to generate interest in books that their classmates read and in reading in general: as one student wrote in the post-interaction survey, "I liked listening book reports of others. People feel that "I'm good at English."

It's important for motivation.”

All of the participants were assigned a two-question survey to gauge their interest in reading paper-based or electronic graded readers for homework at the end of the 14th class. All of the participants completed and submitted the survey at the beginning of the final lesson. After the students completed their final book report presentation in groups, they took the post NGSLT.

Results

To examine the influence of the medium of the graded readers on students' interest in ER, a one-way analysis of variance was performed for each level with the independent variable being the medium of the books. The dependent variable was the self-reported interest scores on a 6-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater interest. As displayed in Table 4, the mean interest scores of the intermediate-level students were higher for the group that read the paper-based graded readers. However, the ANOVA results were non-significant $F(1, 35) = 4.03, p = .052$. The mean interest scores of pre-intermediate-level students were higher for the group that read the electronic graded readers, and the ANOVA was significant $F(1, 44) = 5.46, p = .02$, with the medium of the books accounting for 12% of the difference in interest as assessed by η^2 .

Table 4. Interest Survey Scores and Comparisons between Groups

Level	Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	95% CI (LL, UL)	<i>SD</i>	Difference of <i>M</i>
Intermediate	E	18	3.78	0.21	3.34, 4.21	0.88	(Elec. – Paper)
	P	19	4.32	0.17	3.95, 4.68	0.75	-0.54 ($p = .052$)
Pre-intermediate	E	24	4.13	0.16	3.79, 4.46	0.80	(Elec. – Paper)
	P	22	3.50	0.22	3.05, 3.95	1.01	0.63 ($p = .02$)

All of the students took the NGSLT in the first and final classes of the semester, prior to, and following the ER. A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between

the medium of the books and the vocabulary gains of the students in each level. The independent variable was the medium of the graded readers, and the dependent variable was the vocabulary gains from the pre-test to the post-test. As seen in Table 5, the intermediate and pre-intermediate students who read electronic books achieved greater vocabulary gains, however, the ANOVAs were non-significant, $F(1, 45) = 0.05, p = .82$ and $F(1, 35) = 2.89, p = .10$ respectively.

Table 5. Vocabulary Gains and Comparisons between Groups

Level	Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	95% CI (LL, UL)	<i>SD</i>	Difference
Intermediate	E	18	2.78	0.92	0.84, 4.71	3.89	(Elec. – Paper)
	P	19	0.42	1.03	-1.75, 2.59	4.50	2.36 ($p = .10$)
Pre-intermediate	E	25	1.64	0.81	-0.04, 3.32	4.06	(Elec. – Paper)
	P	22	1.32	1.20	-1.18, 3.81	5.63	0.32 ($p = .82$)

At the end of the 15-week course, the total number of words read by the students was analyzed. In order to determine the relationship of the medium of the graded readers on the amount of words students read, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted for each level. The independent variable was the medium of the books the students read, and the dependent variable was the total number of words the students read. Table 6 shows the original output for the number of words read and the comparisons between groups.

Table 6. Number of Words Read and Comparisons between Groups

Level	Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	95% CI (LL, UL)	<i>SD</i>	Difference
Intermediate	E	18	67255.50	5033.43	56635.88, 77875.12	21355.05	(Elec. – Paper)
	P	19	75734.95	8201.11	58505.06, 93964.83	58505.06	-8479.45 ($p = .39$)
Pre-intermediate	E	25	52214.76	2670.49	46703.14, 57726.38	13352.45	(Elec. – Paper)
	P	22	54743.86	1525.70	51570.99, 57916.73	7156.18	-2529.1 ($p = .43$)

However, after closer examination of this data, several outliers that skewed the results were identified, based on the interquartile range rule of three, and eliminated accordingly. These outliers were intermediate-level students who read 148,693 words in the E-group, and 122,227 and 211,253 words in the P-group, as well as pre-intermediate students who read 1550, 69,029 and 86,987 in the E-group and 35,997 and 69,582 in the P-group. Table 7 shows the mean number of words read and the comparisons between groups after the outliers were eliminated. The intermediate and pre-intermediate students from the P-groups read more words compared to the students from the E-groups. The ANOVA results at the pre-intermediate level were significant, $F(1, 40) = 4.44, p = .04$ with the medium of the books accounting for 32% of the difference in the number of words read as assessed by η^2 . However, the ANOVA results at the intermediate level, $F(1, 32) = 1.42, p = .24$, were non-significant.

Table 7. Number of Words Read and Comparisons between Groups excluding Outliers

Level	Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	95% CI (LL, UL)	<i>SD</i>	Difference
Intermediate	E	17	62465.06	1638.7 5	58991.06, 65939.06	6756.75	(Elec. – Paper)
	P	17	65028.47	1391.8 7	62077.85, 67979.09	5738.81	-2563.41 ($p = .24$)
Pre-intermediate	E	22	52172.86	690.27	50737.37, 53608.35	3237.64	(Elec. – Paper)
	P	20	54939.30	1150.5 7	52531.13, 57347.47	5145.51	-2766.44 ($p = .04$)

Discussion

Participants who read electronic graded readers at the pre-intermediate level expressed greater interest in reading, which was statistically significant. Evaluation of their questionnaire responses revealed three trends that might provide insight into this result. First, students who read electronic books frequently commented on the fact that being able to read using an electronic device made the task of reading faster and easier. As one student wrote, “reading English ebooks makes easy to read a lot of

English, so it's the best way to learn English." Another student commented that "I think is easy to read books and take quizzes on PC." Another common trend this survey revealed was that students often mentioned the wide variety of books they had immediate access to through the Xreading platform as a motivating factor: "Because Xreading has a lot of books, so I could choose book which I like;" "There are many kind of books, so I was exciting;" "(I liked it) Because I could read various genre books;" and "面白い出版社ばかりで意欲に読めたと思う (I think I was motivated to read because all the publishers were interesting)." A final trend was that many students thought the audio feature in Xreading improved their overall learning experience. Students wrote that listening while reading seemed to improve their English ability and understanding: "リスニングとリーディングが両方できたので、英語力につながると思いました (I thought that since I was able to both listen and read, it led to improved proficiency in English); "音声機能がついていてリスニング力も上がったと思う (Because of the listening feature, I think my listening ability also improved);" "When I read book. I listened English voice. It helped my understanding." While another student just described the importance of listening and reading at the same time, "It is important to hear and see the English." On the other hand, participants who read paper-based graded readers at the intermediate level indicated greater interest in graded reading, although this result was non-significant.

Overall, students in both groups at the intermediate level seemed to have a more positive view of reading as reflected in their higher overall mean interest scores. The majority of participants from both groups saw ER as a valuable method to improve their language ability: "Books make my read ability better and I can read a lot of sentence by reading English book;" "My reading skill was grown by reading English books. I think my reading speed became faster... The more I read, the time of reading was shorter than previous book;" "I can now read speedy and smooth. I can get used to English." Many students also seemed to welcome and embrace it as a new and unique approach to language learning: "This task is more exciting than other home task;" "It is unusual, so I got a chance to have

fun;” “When I was high school student, there aren’t any chance that I read English books in English class. So, reading English books was fun;” “I was interested to read English book. Because when I can finish to read a book, felt fulfilled.” It even seemed to change some students’ perspective on reading and learning English: “I thought English books are difficult to me so I didn’t read them. But I don’t think that (now)!”; “I read many many sentences. I have never read like this. I thought English is so hard, but I don’t think it now.”

Despite the general positive overall opinion of ER; however, another interesting theme that might have affected the results was found among the intermediate-level students. The majority of students who gave ER a low rating remarked that they also did not enjoy reading in their L1 and these students predominantly belonged in the E-group. These students who rated reading English paper-based or electronic books as either 1 or 2 frequently wrote statements such as: “I don’t like reading even Japanese books. So it made me tired to read English books;” “I don’t like to read any books;” “I don’t have interests to read any book including Japanese book.” Since the majority of such students happened to belong to the E-group, their negative feelings regarding reading overall seemed to drag down the mean score of the entire E-group. As later discussed in the limitations section of this paper, the implementation of a crossover research design would have provided more reliable results.

The intermediate and pre-intermediate students who read electronic books achieved higher mean scores on the NGSLT; however, the ANOVAs were non-significant. This small increase in vocabulary gains and non-significant finding is not surprising to the researchers due to the short length of the study as well as one of the rules of ER as expressed to the students was to read easy books that match or are below their lexical knowledge. That being said, a more careful examination of the questionnaire responses provided some possible clues as to why the students from both of the electronic groups outscored those from the paper-based groups. A greater number of students who belonged to the E-groups at both levels seemed to select books that were slightly higher than their

proficiency level more frequently. It is possible that they saw this as a way to build their vocabulary and this then had an effect on the higher mean vocabulary gain scores. This trend was more apparent in the pre-intermediate level group as several students made comments such as: “知らない単語も周りから推測したり、調べたりしてたくさん学べてよかったです(It was good that I was able to study a lot of unknown words by inferring their meaning from the context or looking them up);” “I met words having never met. I look over this words. So I can know new words.” Students in the intermediate E-group also echoed these thoughts although to a lesser extent overall: “The more I read a lot of words, the more words I don’t understand, so I got the chance to investigate;” “I can also see words of spoken language that I do not usually see;” “I learned some words that I had not known. In fact, my words of English level may improve than before.”

The intermediate and pre-intermediate students who were in the P-groups read more total words than the students who read electronic books. A possible explanation for this might be difficulties associated with reading for a long time on electronic devices. Many of the students commented in their questionnaire that reading on electronic devices posed various difficulties for them. One student remarked, “It is troublesome to open PC,” while another expressed, “I would like to read “paperbook” because the charge of my phone is reduced and my eyes are tired.” A large number of students echoed the latter reason with another student commenting that “reading books on a smart phone is tired my eyes. I like normal book more.” Other students simply stated the amount of words they read was a direct result of the platform they read books on; “I don’t want to read because it’s not a book but phone;” and “I think reading English books is interesting, but not interesting to read English ebooks.” Another possible explanation might be that the students in the E-group just simply decided to stop once they hit their reading goal of either 50,000 or 60,000 words. Reading on a mobile electronic device such as a smartphone or tablet would make it easier to stop exactly at your goal because you have a full virtual library and your current word count at your fingertips at all times, unlike the students

in the P-group who had to retrieve books from the school library and then separately log in to a website to retrieve their current word count.

Possible Limitations

A number of potential limitations need to be considered. The first lies in the fact that student interest was only measured at the end of the study. By gauging student interest at the beginning and end of the study, we would have been able to better assess whether the gains in student interest were connected to the actual interaction of electronic or paper-based readers instead of other factors like pre-existing interest in reading. Second, the vocabulary post-test was administered in the last class after the final book report. Although the students were given ample time to complete the task, many of them seemed to either lack focus or just rushed through the test so they could leave. In order to collect more reliable data, we believe that this test should be administered at the beginning of the last class. Third, although this study was comparative, the use of a crossover research design would have been a more effective way to eliminate potential moderating variables and better measure whether it was indeed the different medium of reading that had an effect on student interest, vocabulary gains and the number of words read. This study took place in the second semester, so in order to further our research in the future, a crossover study should be done over a full academic year with the groups switching treatments at the beginning of the second semester. Finally, reading comprehension was not assessed in this study. In a future research project, the researchers will aim to better assess L2 reading comprehension through pre- and post-reading comprehension tests.

Conclusion

Although this exploratory study was unable to find convincing evidence of the overall superiority of electronic readers versus paper-based readers in the acquisition of L2 vocabulary, results suggested that paper-based readers might help to boost overall student motivation to read more at lower

proficiency levels. As for increasing overall interest in reading, students at the pre-intermediate level indicated a significant preference for electronic readers while those at the intermediate level seemed to favor traditional paper-based books (although the latter finding was not significant). A particularly interesting finding from the research, which was encouraging to the researchers and underscored the merits of including ER in their classes, was that the majority of students in both groups felt that ER was a valuable and enjoyable method by which to improve their language ability. A post-study analysis by the researchers brought several obvious limitations to light but the findings in this initial exploratory study have piqued their interest in conducting further research. Subsequent research should be conducted over an entire academic year, consist of a crossover research design, gauge student interest and reading comprehension pre- and post-study, and the post-test should be administered at a time when students feel less rushed. It is hoped that further research will help to more clearly identify the most appropriate tools for students to further their L2 language development.

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Appendix A: An Explanation of Extensive Reading

Extensive reading って何？

Extensive Reading を日本語に訳すと「多読」となりますが、ただ単に何でもたくさん読むのとは違います。そこには、効果的に学習を行なうための、いくつかの簡単なルールがあります。Extensive Reading を日ごろから実行して、英語の色々なスキルを高めましょう。

まず、どうして Extensive Reading が優れた学習法であるか、簡単に説明しましょう。言葉を身につけるには、その言葉をたくさん聞いたり、読んだりして、できるだけ多くの自分が理解できる「インプット」が必要です。みなさんも日本語が話せるようになるまでには、まわりの人たちが、いつも話しかけてくれた情報を自然とどんどん取り入れていったに違いありません。英語でも同じです。よく言われることは、言葉を身につける最も良い方法は、その言葉が話されている国に行くことです。でも、それができない時には、次に良い方法は、その言葉の情報を理解できるレベルで、できる限りたくさん読んだり、聞いたりすることです。Extensive Reading は、それを行なうことなのです。実際に Extensive Reading を実行して、1年で TOEIC の点数が 100 点以上上がった先輩もいます。

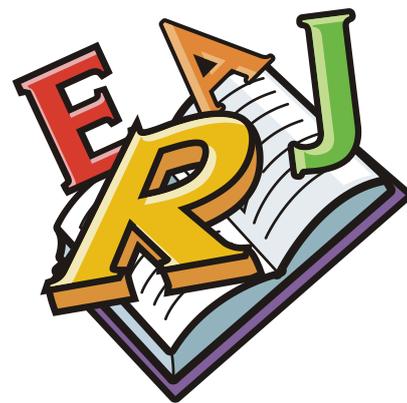
では、実行するに当たっての、Extensive Reading を効果的に行なう簡単なルールを説明しましょう。

1. 読みたいものを自分で選んで読む
2. 簡単なものを読む
3. 楽しめるものを読む
4. できる限りたくさん読む

ルールはこれだけです。できそうな気がしませんか？特に、2番目の「簡単なものを読む」を実行する際に注意が必要です。受験勉強を通して、辞書を使いながら難しい英文を読むことが習慣になっていませんか。皆さんは、日本語で小説や新聞、雑誌を読むときに、辞書片手に読んでいきますか？そんなことはしないでしょ。読みたいものを、気軽に読んでいましょう。英語の Extensive Reading でも同じです。辞書なしで簡単に読めるものをたくさん、読み進めてください。そして、自分が慣れてきたなと感じたら、少しずつレベルアップしていきましょう。

近畿大学には、Extensive Reading 用の本が、数百冊蔵書されています。誰もが自分にあったレベルから始められるように、絵本のような簡単なものから、一般の洋書に近いレベルのものまでそろっています。ジャンルも、小説、伝記、映画、自然と非常にたくさんあります。まずは1冊薄い本を手にとって、始めてみましょう。

辛い勉強ではなく、楽しみながらできる学習法ですから、ぜひ、実行しましょう！1年後には、あなたの英語の実力は、きっと飛躍的に伸びていますよ！ Good Luck!



Tips from Teachers: Getting into the Conference Circuit

John Rucynski

Okayama University

It can take time for young teachers to make the leap from conference attendee to conference presenter. At one point, however, it's a leap you should make. Giving conference presentations is not only a way to start building up your CV, but also one of the most effective ways to share and develop your teaching and research ideas. Before making that first conference presentation, however, you of course first need to have your proposal accepted. In the first installment of this two-part column, I will share six tips for preparing conference proposals, based on my own experiences and discussions with conference organizers and proposal raters.

1. Read the submission guidelines carefully. Then, read them again.

This may sound like common sense, but based on my discussions with experienced conference proposal raters, not everyone follows this advice. Think of your own teaching. Imagine you've assigned an essay and carefully provided students with formatting guidelines. You pick one essay out of a huge pile and see that the student has in no way followed these guidelines. That student certainly needs to have written a wonderful essay to help you get over your initial negative reaction. While you might not always be immediately rejected for not following all the guidelines, you certainly don't want to make an immediate bad impression in an already competitive process.

In addition, think of writing conference proposals just like preparing job applications. You know how schools are all asking for essentially the same information, but always in a slightly different format? It's the same when submitting a proposal for a conference. Different conferences will generally have slightly different guidelines for submitting your idea. Most will require an abstract,

with the most common maximum word count being 300 words, yet this can also be as low as 150-200 words. Some will require only an abstract, while others will ask for a separate session description as well. Guidelines are generally posted weeks, if not months, before the submission deadline, so you have plenty of time to become familiar with all the guidelines.

2. Choose your session type carefully.

Submission for some smaller conferences is very straightforward, as they may feature only one type of vetted presentation type. For bigger conferences, however, you will usually have a number of options, including presentation length, presentation focus (e.g., research or practice-based), and format (e.g., presentation or poster session). In addition, you will need to choose a content area or strand for your proposal.

Starting with the presentation type, it's important to visualize your presentation and carefully consider how much time you need to present your idea. Novice presenters may naturally want to aim for a shorter presentation. Rest assured that giving a conference presentation doesn't mean speaking in front of an audience for an hour. The most common presentation length is a 30-minute session, featuring a 20-25 minute presentation, followed by Q&A. The TESOL International Convention even features a 20-minute "Teaching Tip" session.

With regards to the content area, conferences that feature a large number of choices will usually have descriptions on the conference website. Read these carefully and be sure that your proposal has a strong connection with the area you choose. These areas are usually printed in conference programs next to each presentation, so it is important that you choose the appropriate area.

Finally, think carefully about whether sharing your idea works better as a presentation or a poster session. Poster sessions are an excellent format for novice presenters, as you don't have the pressure of speaking to a larger audience at one time. In addition, they often offer even better opportunities

for networking and receiving constructive criticism.

3. Don't overlook the session summary description.

For conferences such as the JALT International Annual Convention, you will need to prepare both an abstract (250 words maximum) and a session summary (75 words maximum). Because of the longer length of the former, it is a novice mistake to think the shorter part can just be written at the last minute. There are two problems with this. First, from my own personal experience, it can actually be more difficult to write when you have a very limited word count. It takes time to write a precise session summary. Second, this summary will actually appear in the conference program. So, extra care needs to be taken to ensure you have written an appealing and accurate summary. While members of the Reading Committee (for the JALT Convention) won't actually rate this part of the proposal, if you do get accepted conference attendees will see only your title and session summary.

Even when there is a separate section for writing the session summary, the session should still generally be carefully described within the abstract itself. Raters are not only considering the quality of your idea, but also whether you have a clear vision of how you will present it to your audience. While you obviously want to show the importance of your idea, experienced proposal raters will immediately spot a potential presenter who is offering more than they can deliver. Your overambitious promise to "demonstrate 10 activities in 30 minutes" will merely show raters that you haven't actually given the actual presentation much thought.

4. Have someone review your proposal before submitting. Then, have someone else review it.

This advice is included on many conference websites and there is a good reason for it. There comes a time in every proposal's life when it needs a fresh set of eyes. One consistent point that came up when I discussed the review process with experienced proposal raters is they have little tolerance for poor,

sloppy writing or English mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes, especially when writing on a tight deadline. Having a colleague or two review your proposal will help to ensure a mistake-free final version.

Another reason to have someone review your proposal is to check for clarity. What you want to express in your abstract may be clear in your mind, but do others agree? Keep in mind that proposal raters are generally busy fellow teachers reading proposals on a volunteer basis. As one experienced proposal rater told me, it always makes a good impression if the proposal is immediately clear without needing to reread it. Does your proposal pass this test? Some conference websites even include the proposal rating rubric. If you ask someone to review your abstract, share this information as well to help them critically evaluate your proposal.

It's also valuable to establish a proposal review peer support network for two other reasons. First, most conferences do not give feedback on rejected proposals. Second, many conferences also do not disclose the acceptance rate. Considering these points, this support will help you to try again next time if you happen to get rejected.

5. Consider citations carefully.

One of the most common questions novice proposal writers ask me is "How many citations do I need?" Unfortunately, there is no definite consensus on this, as if you ask 10 different experienced proposal raters, you might get 10 slightly different opinions.

Using a citation or two in your opening statement is a good way to establish that you are familiar with the area you hope to give a presentation about. Overall, however, most experienced raters I discussed this with put a much greater emphasis on the quality of the writer's idea rather than how many citations they used. Considering this, you might want to use citations sparingly. Keep in mind that citations also count as part of your word count, so it is better to use these precious words to clearly

explain your own idea, rather than clutter your proposal with citations.

Despite the advice above, when submitting a proposal for a more research-oriented conference, a greater number of citations could be expected. Some conference websites actually include sample abstracts or old conference programs, so check these for patterns. If still in doubt, also try to consult with someone familiar with the respective conference.

One final important note is that for most conference proposals you do not need a full reference list at the end. A reference list obviously takes up a lot of words, so don't include this unless it is explicitly stated to include a reference list in the guidelines.

6. Dare to be different.

Never worry that your idea might be too unique. As long as you can make a strong case for your idea being a worthy addition to the field of English language teaching, why not give it a try? One of my first ever conference proposals was based on using *The Simpsons* in English classes. It was a teaching idea I was very passionate about, but I had little hope that it would actually be accepted. Not only was it accepted at a major international conference, but it is still one of my best-attended presentations to this day. In addition, it also led to a peer-reviewed international publication.

The lesson here is there is always room for new and innovative ideas in our field. When we attend conferences, we see the same topics again and again, so I always make a point out of attending at least a presentation or two about a unique topic I know little about. Who knows, maybe I'll be attending your unique presentation next!

Writing *Dango*: Helping students visualize academic paper structure

Kathryn M. Tanaka

Otemae University

Introduction

Teaching students to write research papers in English in Japanese universities presents some unique challenges. Not least among these is the fact that the fundamental structure of academic essays is different in Japanese and English. Some of the most common writing styles in Japanese, for example the Jo-Ha-Kyū (Introduction, Pivot, Swift Conclusion) and Ki-Shō-Ten-Ketsu (Introduction, Additional Information, Pivot, Conclusion) are structured so that the argument is not brought together and does not make sense until the conclusion.

If students have learned writing in high school or other university classes in Japan, it likely follows these structures. To help students learn to write academic papers in English, I have found it helps to provide a visual device that they can use to structure their outlines. In addition to giving them a map for their own papers, the exercise I do allows for easy evaluation of their peers' work as well.

Using Dango to Introduce Academic Writing

I introduce research papers as having a structure like a *dango* stick. In this visualization, the dango stick is the thesis statement, or the main argument. It clearly states what the paper is about and each dango is connected to this stick (Figure 1).

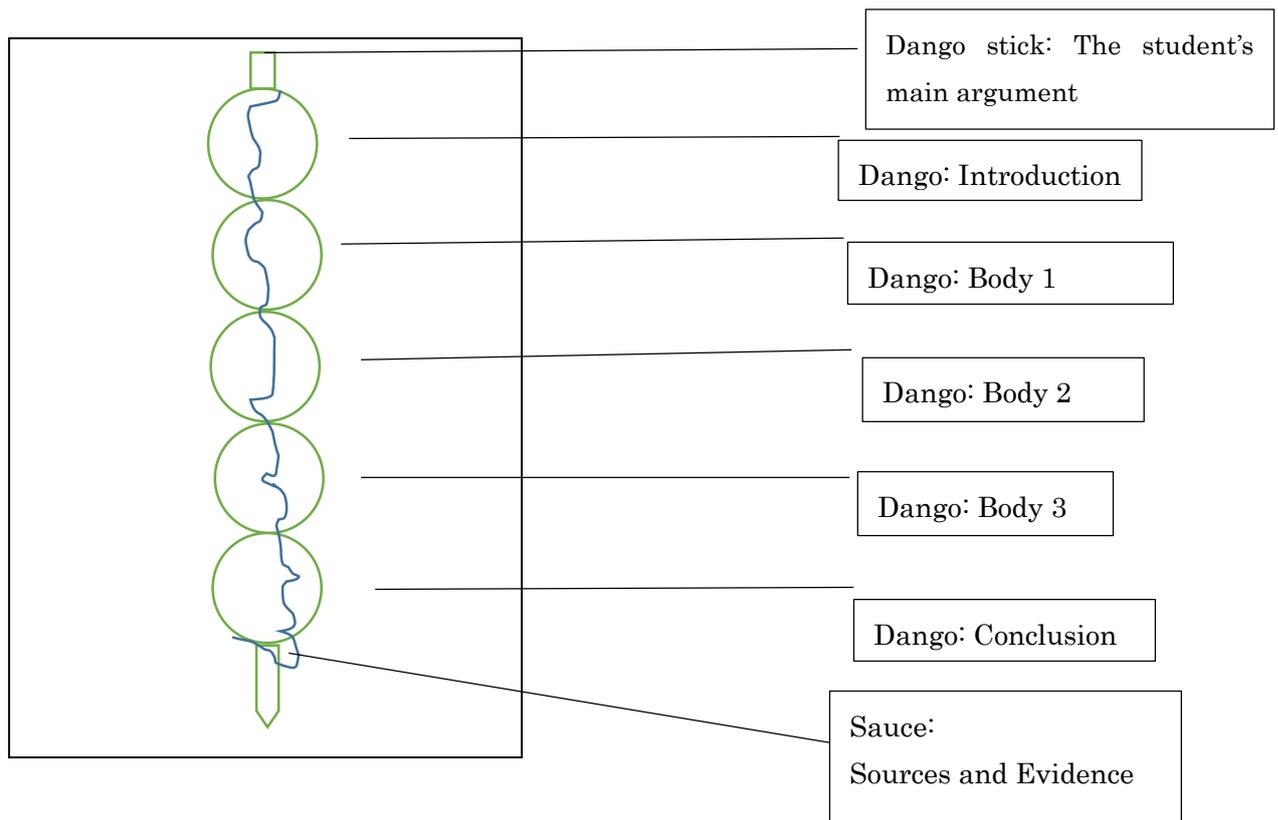


Figure 1. Structuring Research Papers as Dango

The first dango is the introduction. Following this structure, the second, third, and fourth dango are the body sections where the student analyses evidence and presents their argument. Each dango is distinct, but again, each is connected to the stick and because they are made of sticky rice, they also stick to each other. The stickiness of the dango helps students understand transitioning and how the paper is connected yet distinct. Finally, the last dango is the conclusion.

Many students also know that dango typically come with a condiment: mitarashi dango comes with a sweet soy sauce, and some dango might be topped with anko, or sweet bean paste. I tell

students that this sauce is their sources. The paper is better when students have quotes and paraphrases from other sources to support their argument, but these shouldn't overpower the dango, which should be their own writing.

This dango structure can be adapted and used on the paragraph level, used of course for a simple three-point essay, or it can be used to structure larger works such as senior theses. The dango metaphor helps the students immediately visualize writing structure. I introduce the dango structure and give students the dango in Appendix A as the first step to making an outline for our research papers in my sophomore and junior seminars. They are free to fill in the dango with as much detail as they like, or limit their explanation of the dango to a single topic sentence.

Students have universally responded very positively to this way of starting an outline, with some reporting they have introduced the dango in other Japanese writing classes or to their friends who attend other universities. Many students remarked the dango structure is "easiest to understand" and "it's fun to write my paper." Other students stated it also made it easier for them to understand their peers' papers as well, meaning that the dango method can also be used as part of a structured peer editing of papers. Students read each other's papers and then fill in the dango according to what they read in their peer's paper. The author and the reviewer should have dango to match, and if they do not, the author should revisit their argument.

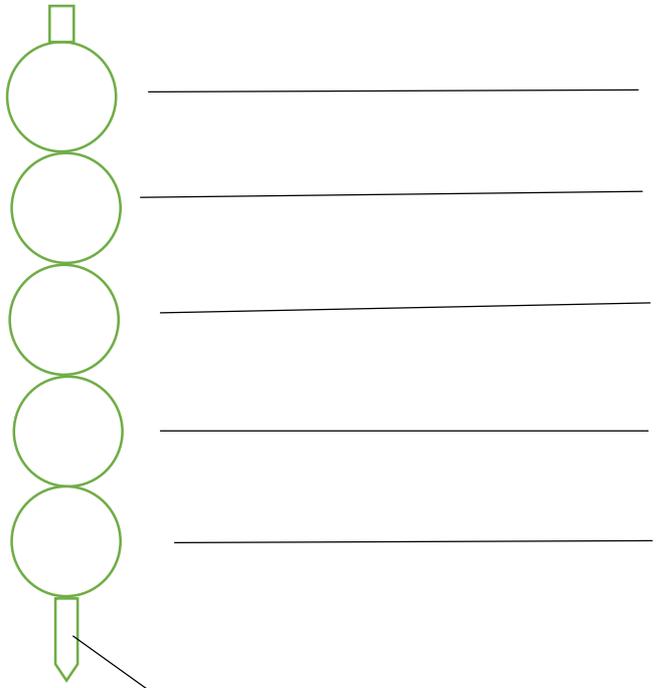
Conclusion

The dango style of teaching academic writing is easy to understand and versatile. It is easily adaptable to different contexts and provides an easy way for students to start writing outlines to English language research papers. It helps students lay out what they want to discuss in their papers, and because the structure is easy to understand it can easily be used as a tool to assess peer writing.

Appendix A: Rough Outline Using Dango

Academic Writing: Dango Outline

Write the main argument for each dango on the line next to it.



Write your thesis statement, your dango stick. This should be one sentence and should clearly state the main point of your thesis:

What's your dango sauce? Name some of your sources and how you'll use them here.

Chapter Event News

Armando Duarte

The University of Shiga Prefecture

May 2019: Teachers Helping Teachers

Kobe JALT was fortunate enough to host four THT representatives – Michael Furmanovsky, Kathi Kitao, Catriona Takeuchi-Chalmers, and Chris Ruddenklau – as they discussed a number of activities the SIG engages in throughout Asia, and some of their experiences and lessons they learned through their time in Vietnam, Nepal and Laos.

Vietnam

First to present was Kathi. She began by summarizing her experiences traveling to Vietnam – four trips in total – with the SIG. On the topic of classroom practices she has observed in Vietnam, she informed Kobe JALT that Vietnamese teachers of English are “very tied to the textbook,” which teachers adopt at the behest of school administrators. Furthermore, students are tested at the end of the year on textbook content. Teachers, she says, cannot skip a chapter because otherwise students will be unprepared for the exam. Long-time teachers working in Japan will no doubt be familiar with such a scenario. As Kathi noted, however, there has been more of a push towards more student-centered teaching as opposed to the traditional teacher-fronted method. Given these two often contradictory contexts, among the useful topics that THT presenters can deal with are “How can textbooks be better utilized?” and “How can teachers integrate group and pair activities?” Kathi further informed us that THT volunteers in Vietnam are sometimes given the opportunity to lead classes as a guest instructor at the University of Foreign Languages, Hue University, which gives participants a first-hand view of

what challenges Vietnamese teachers of English face daily. She also brought up a unique characteristic of THT Vietnam – host university students, facilitators, who are paired up with THT volunteers and act as assistants, guides, shopping buddies, and translators. They are called “facilitators” and are a constant presence both outside of the conference sessions in THT presentations.

Nepal

Nepal, according to Catriona, is a beautiful country where many of the residents live through subsistence farming, spirituality, and smiles. Her experiences with local people have been filled with happiness, generosity, and color.

The country’s unique geography – landlocked, with large regions of the country being inaccessible due to natural terrain – is mirrored in the classroom, where desks and benches combine to make a cramped teaching space. Nevertheless, local teachers’ enthusiasm for teaching and teaching materials is evident in their reaction to books – “the teachers love the books; you have to pry them from their hands”. One question THT participants in Nepal grapple with relates to space: “How can we do this (meaning any particular teaching activity) given that our classrooms are so packed?” This and other questions can be brainstormed through two full days of workshops where local teachers pick up new teaching skills through working with THT volunteers.

In Nepal, “the teachers are very eager to learn”, according to Kathi, and are also very warm and welcoming but somewhat shy at first. Besides pedagogical workshops for local teachers, THT volunteers in Nepal also have the opportunity to visit local schools and orphanages and thus spend time with local children. Family and Friends Nepal, an organization run by Randy Bollig, facilitates these visits and works to provide a valuable experience for both THT volunteers and local community which extends beyond classroom engagement. Other organizations which support local people are bringbooks.org, which helps provide a variety of books to local schools, and Maiti Nepal, which

provides residential and educational facilities for women and children who are rescued from human trafficking. Visiting non-school environments, like orphanages and women's centers, provides "opportunities to see what else is going on," according to Kathi.

Philippines

Michael discussed his experiences with THT in the Philippines. Before any trip to the Philippines can begin, Michael must go through the process of asking all prospective participants about the timing of their school's nyushi, or entrance exams. Japanese university entrance exams can conflict with THT trips, as both take place in February. Once all schedules are clear, Michael asks himself, "where do we go and what do we do?" The answer to this question, in his experiences in the Philippines and Vietnam, has been "to go further into the regional areas where there are more disparities". That means moving away from more populated areas and campuses like Can Tho University of Foreign Languages and Hue College of Foreign Languages, where THT participants usually hold workshops.

In fact, Michael's approach has been so effective that he told Kobe JALT about a year where he asked several volunteers if they would be returning to Vietnam again. After expressing their appreciation of the experience, they gave a polite "no" and explained that they had been so inspired by their experience that they decided to try a different THT seminar in Nepal or Laos.

THT Laos and LaoTESOL

With over 200 teacher visits to Laos since 2010, Laos is certainly a popular THT destination. Prior to departure Chris, the program co-ordinator, meets all prospective teachers wishing to visit Laos, either for meals in his home in Japan, or via Skype. CV's are submitted and prospective workshop topics discussed. Workshops need to be relevant to the Lao context. Visiting teachers participate in a CCM, Contrast Culture Method training workshop prior to beginning their visit.

Chris opened his talk by telling us that Laos is a unique country influenced by both socialism and Theravada Buddhism not to mention the *je ne sais quoi* touch of the French. It is a country of great ethnic diversity, with 49 distinct languages spoken amongst its six million people. Many visiting teachers have said that they feel inspired by how much Lao teachers are achieving with so little, while in Japan we often achieve so little with so much. Laos is indeed rich, in having great food and in the warm hearts of its people and in the dedication of its hardworking students and teachers.

Visiting teachers have spent time offering workshops in programs organized by Lao teachers, or in classrooms with teachers and students. There has been further work done at teachers training colleges, country high schools, elementary schools, or at the Vientiane and Lao American Colleges and at the National University of Laos. In addition, visiting teachers offer one third to one half of the workshops and plenary sessions for the annual LaoTESOL Conference. LaoTESOL is a unique event, in that it is a closed conference, for invited presenters only, although in the past that has included over 400 invited Lao teachers of English. It is the only in-service training available for many Lao English teachers. Chris, a member of the LaoTESOL Proceedings Committee, told us that a warm welcome and large audiences, could be assured for all presenters. Visiting teachers coming to Laos have the privileged experience of meeting many of the country's brightest teachers and students.

He stated that visiting teachers, as they have only a limited knowledge of teaching English in Laos, should proceed by first, offering friendship to build interest and trust, and then to listen, before mutually sharing ideas and experiences. These exchanges have proven to be affirming and a moral boost for both visiting and local Lao teachers. He believes that while teachers can keep abreast of new ideas by attending workshops, it is often only through the personalization of ideas, which occurs when teachers share with trusted colleagues, that teachers find they are truly inspired to make changes in their teaching practice. Being in a Lao class, with a Lao teacher and sharing ideas to solve real problems, overcome real difficulties in real situations, is indeed an invaluable opportunity for all

concerned.

The Lao Program is not a volunteer program. Volunteer programs in their purest sense, have clearly defined outcomes, involve a desire to selflessly work for the benefit of others, require a depth of understanding of the host country and usually involve a significant commitment of time. Most visiting teachers do not possess the depth of knowledge of Lao culture or are able to offer the time or commitment that being a volunteer requires.

Chris reminded us that local teachers are far more knowledgeable about teaching in Laos, so visiting teachers need to listen, offer friendship, support, and time, which he called “the greatest gift.” They need to remember that, *it is easier to tell someone else how to do something well than to do it well yourself.*

Chris said that all the THT programs are clearly unique, special, and memorable. In the words of one visiting teacher, *“I’ve been back in Japan for a couple of days and have already recommended it to a dozen people. The people of Laos and the members of our group were all wonderful. I definitely intend to participate again,”* Benjamin Dornbusch Laos 2019.

If you want to experience something different, refresh your desire to teach, hone your teaching skills, and share ideas with fellow professional teachers, we suggest that you shouldn’t miss trying any - or all - of THT’s great programs.

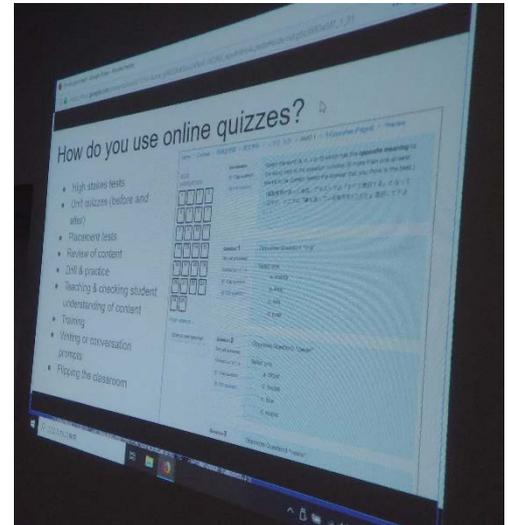


Left to right: Catriona Takeuchi-Chambers, Chris Ruddenklau, Michael Furmanovsky, Kathi Kitao

Photo credit: Armando Duarte

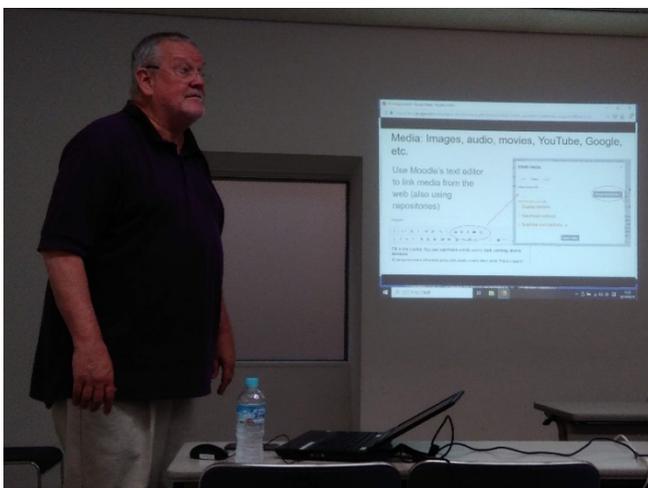
June

Bob Gettings, from Hokusei Gakuin University, presented about using Moodle for online quizzes. Moodle offers a depth of quiz customization including question banks, automatic grading, question sharing among teachers, and even “certainty based marking” wherein students can indicate their confidence in their answer. Teachers who use Moodle will receive a wealth of information, such as whether or not students have finished a quiz, what time the student started and finished the quiz, and how many times a test was taken. Bob’s presentation can be found on his website, bgettings.com, by looking for “June 29: Kobe JALT” under “2019 conferences”.



Ways to use online quizzes, including checking student understanding and as review

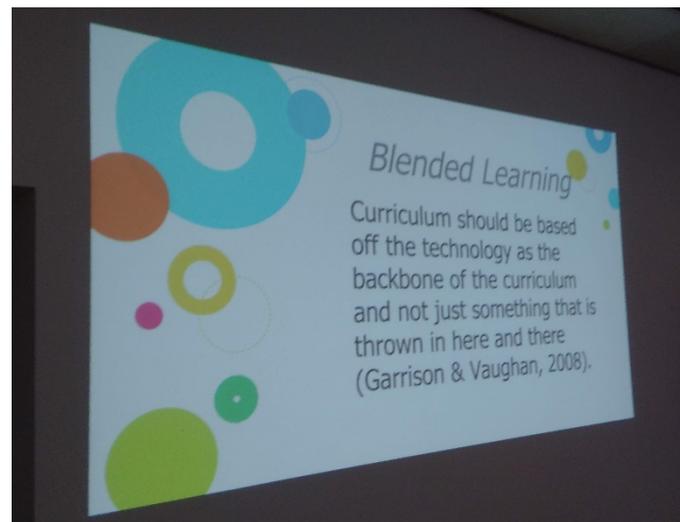
Photo credit: Armando Duarte



Bob Gettings from Hokusei Gakuin University

Photo credit: Armando Duarte

Erin Noxon, a Google certified educator from Sagano High School in Kyoto, presented about using various Google applications in language learning. Specifically, she employed blended learning to draw on the best techniques from CALL with traditional, analog methods. Erin's students learn communicative English in a listening class and a speaking class. One aspect of technology use that Erin impresses upon her students is digital citizenship, which includes the safe, responsible, critical, productive, and proactive use of technology. Perhaps the most impressive technique she demonstrated was the use of voice-to-text in Google Docs as a way for students to engage in speaking homework.



Left:
Erin

Noxon from Sagano High School

Right: What does “blended learning” mean?

Photo credit: Armando Duarte

Some of Erin's materials can be found at bit.ly/EilloWorksheets. She can also be found on Twitter where she goes by the username @tesolgeek and she can be reached by email at erinnoxon@gmail.com.

Conclusion

Our May and June events were inspiring examples of ways teachers are engaging with important issues, be it teacher training in other Asian countries, or technology, and integrating their experiences into their language education. This fall, we will have some equally important events lined up, so make sure to join the Kobe JALT Facebook group page, or stay up to date by visiting the Kobe JALT website at <https://sites.google.com/site/kobejalt/>

Upcoming Chapter Events

September

Saturday, September 28th, 3-5pm, Kobe Kokusai Kaikan

Theme: Resume writing and job hunting (Joint event with JET Alumni Association of Western Japan)

October

Saturday, October 19th, 3-5pm, Kobe Kokusai Kaikan

Theme: Graduate and PhD student showcase

December

Saturday, December 7th

Time, location, and theme TBA

If you are interested in recapping a chapter event for this publication, submitting your original research, advice, or activities, please feel free to contact the Kobe JALT Publications Team at kobejaltpublications@gmail.com.

Deadlines for the winter issue of the Kobe JALT Journal are due before December 20, 2019.

Book Review

English-Medium Instruction From An English as a Lingua Franca Perspective. Kumiko Murata (Ed.). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019. vi + 289 pp.

Reviewed by

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The ongoing march of globalization has seen a rise in the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and subsequently, English-medium instruction (EMI) classes. Governments and institutions around the world, especially in Europe, started actively promoting EMI since the late 1970s. Japan, meanwhile, has been a little late to the proverbial party: it was only in 2009 that the government launched *The Global 30 Project - Establishing University Network for Internationalization*. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), this project aims to use English courses to “promote internationalization of (the) academic environment of Japanese universities and acceptance of excellent international students studying in Japan” (MEXT 2019). This has led to many universities offering more EMI courses, but what has this actually meant for students in these EMI classrooms? There’s a dearth of research in this area and this collection edited by Murata Kumiko fills many gaps.

The book has 16 chapters, split into three parts, with nine articles focused on the Japanese context. The first part looks at ELF from the perspective of higher education and language policies of governments and institutions. The five contributing authors examine viewpoints from higher education, the Global South, Sweden, Korea and Japan. For readers in Japan, Masakazu Iino’s article

on EMI provides an apt summary of the state of affairs as government and business push to use EMI to further economic gains. Perhaps his most interesting assertion is that for business in Japan, English is seen as an “additive language rather than a sole medium of business communication” (p. 90). This may be true for small to medium-sized businesses that don’t deal with foreigners, but for other companies of comparable size that do, the opposite would be true. Indeed, the larger and more global the company gets, the more English seems to be the preferred medium of communication. One such example is Rakuten, whose official language is English (Rakuten, 2016). What is clear, as the author notes, is that more research is needed, especially into the multilingual reality for the growing migrant community in Japan. After the first third of the book, the focus shifts from a more macro-approach to a more micro-level approach.

The second part examines ELF in EMI contexts, focusing on attitudes, identities and classroom practices. English is now the main lingua franca in academia, and the chapters here contain many useful studies and observations. One of the more interesting studies was by Kriukow and Galloway (p. 137), who noted the importance of communicating exactly what EMI is to the relevant stakeholders in an institution, with a particular focus on the effect on students’ conceptualizations of EMI. Their findings indicated misunderstandings between teachers and students and English language teachers and content teachers, all of which affected the perception of courses and course evaluations. This is a critical area of focus as it not only affects classroom results, but a teacher’s career if negative evaluations are linked to mis-conceptualizations. It is clear that higher education institutions should strive to explain exactly what EMI entails in their institutions, from a university-wide perspective down to an individual course. These findings are also useful for non-Japanese specific audiences, and it would be bereft of the review to neglect to mention other case studies from East Asian universities that are also useful for Japanese readers. Ying Wang found EMI courses to be critical to the internalization of a Chinese university, provided staff and students

were capable enough to use English to describe and share Chinese culture. English as a lingua franc theme could also be found in the South Korean context, where Joo-Kyung Park noted EMI courses make up about 30% of degrees. The South Korean government started their EMI push in 2004, but Park notes education and language policymakers in Korea remain tied to a sense of power and prestige of American English, rather than a proper understanding of ELF. A similar sentiment exists in Japan, and it would benefit the country if more English varieties were indeed respected and encouraged. This is often easier said than done, and part III of the book focuses on ELF in EMI settings case studies.

The third part focuses on policy, practice and pedagogy in ELF in EMI settings, melding theory with real life examples. Of the five articles, three focus on Japanese universities. Masaki Oda's chapter is a highlight, describing in detail the challenges of transforming a university's EFL program to an ELF program. Among the most important things is simply clearly stating, and having all staff agree, that ELF is *the* goal of English language programs at your university. This means recruiting teachers from non-native English speaking backgrounds, and even changing assessment standards to recognize ELF. This may be problematic for many native English speaking teachers, Japanese students and indeed, the students' parents. Other challenges examined includes assessments in an ELF context. Where does one judge between what is correct and incorrect? How does one design English assessment tests that are fair to all ELF speakers? In the final chapter of the book, Elana Shohamy posits this area of critical language testing as revolutionary and controversial, noting "it is only when there will be tests of ELF that recognition of ELF will be accepted and used" (p.283). English tests today reflect the power of English native speakers, and do not reflect how English in ELF contexts are actually used. If more tests reflect this reality, non-standard forms of English will be more accepted. Indeed, this must begin with individual teachers, maturing and spreading organically to more departments and faculties.

EMI is a somewhat trendy and easily marketable term in English education at the moment. University administrators use it to attract full-fee paying students, and government bureaucrats can claim progress in internationalization and educational standards. However, quality and quantitative research into specific EMI from an ELF perspective remain scant, despite the focus of the Japanese government and many of its universities on it. *English-Medium Instruction from an English as a Lingua Franca Perspective* is a useful contribution in this area, especially for Kobe JALT readers. More than half of its articles focus on Japanese situations, making it a worthwhile investment of time and money.

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