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Editor's Note

Preparing for English at Work: Intercultural Communicative Competence in Language Education

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The advancement of globalization, the upcoming Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economic integration, the ongoing negotiations for major free trade agreements involving all countries within the Asian region, and the institutions, companies, and individuals involved rely on successful communication across borders. Although English cannot always be - and should not be presumed to be - the lingua franca for any given multilingual context (Kubota, 2013; Kubota & McKay, 2009; Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011) in Asia, it is often the language chosen. The choice of English as a lingua franca (ELF) is exemplified by ASEAN's decision to use English as the working language of the association (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2007) and by companies' increasing use of the language for international and internal business communication. While English has long been often used for international meetings, some Asia-based companies, such as Nissan, Rakuten, Fast Retailing, Bridgestone, and Samsung (Mukai, 2013; Neeley, 2012), have adopted English throughout their organizations. The use of English for communication is not limited to employees of multinational or major domestic companies. With tourism reaching more remote areas and the rising mobility of students and workers in the region, service employees may at times need to communicate with customers using the shared knowledge they have of a language, which may often be English (Yoneoka, 2011). Additionally, English may be necessary to access information for workers in many jobs (Frazier, 2012; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). Furthermore, even when spoken communication is in another language, written communication may be required to be in English (Evans, 2013).

As non-native speakers of English are increasingly involved in business transactions with each other, more attention is being paid to how English is used as a lingua franca in the business domain. According to Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013), English as a business lingua franca (BELF) focuses on achieving successful communication; however, while intelligibility is important, fluency and linguistic accuracy are not. As with ELF, language is used as a code which does not require understanding of its native-speaking cultures; in effect, it does not belong to any particular group; instead, it is informed by the cultures and languages of its users and thus becomes everyone's language (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). As Canagarajah (2007, p. 926) noted, "LFE [lingua franca English] does not exist as a system 'out there.' It is constantly brought into being in each context of communication." BELF retains these qualities of context-dependency and fluidity (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013).

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In international business contexts where both parties are non-native speakers of English, a high level of proficiency in English is not necessary to communicate successfully (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Kubota, 2013). While language knowledge and field-specific vocabulary are required (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013), proficiency in English matters less than expertise in the field in question (Kubota, 2013; VanderMey, 2013). Skill in using strategies to overcome communication problems and understanding and respect of the cultures of the people involved are essential; together with language knowledge and business expertise, these qualities can lead to intercultural communicative competence "sufficient for getting the work done and creating rapport" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013, p. 27).

As McKay (2003) pointed out, when English is used as an international language, pedagogy "must consider the specific goals that lead learners to study English and not assume that these goals necessarily involve attaining full proficiency in the language" (p. 5). Kubota (2013) commented that "the blurred definition of language proficiency for business purposes calls into question the appropriateness of conventional goals for teaching foreign languages" (para. 31). With the increasing use of a fluid, situation-specific English by non-native speakers of varying levels of proficiency with their counterparts from different cultures, having intercultural communicative competence as a goal instead of native-speaker-like proficiency may better prepare our students to join the globalized business community. English is a tool, and intercultural communicative competence is what will allow our students to use that tool well in context-appropriate ways without requiring an advanced language proficiency level. In this brief note, just two aspects of successful communication in international business contexts that language educators may want to consider adding in more depth to their classes will be discussed: communication strategies and intercultural awareness.

Preventing or overcoming problems in communication is crucial in business: failure or avoidance of communication can have a negative impact in such areas as collaboration (Neeley, Hinds, & Cramton, 2012), relationships, and reputation (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). Accommodation strategies to facilitate communication should be explicitly taught with ample opportunity given for practice. Critical strategies include using context to obtain meaning, requesting clarification to obtain meaning, restating to clarify meaning, self-repairing to clarify meaning, using circumlocution, summarizing, using examples, and supplementing spoken communication with gestures and other non-verbal means (Kaur, 2011; Kubota, 2013; Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011). These practical strategies are employed in business situations as more employees are expected to effectively communicate in a language in which they and / or their interlocutors may not be highly proficient. Taking the strategy of supplementing spoken communication as an example shows practices that are as varied as the contexts. In training Thai employees about the production process and technical skills for a new factory, Japanese employees supported their explanations with charts and demonstrations (Sakai, 2013). Service workers in Japan in Yoneoka's (2011) study used maps, menus, and other items at hand to communicate with customers from other countries. A professional in Hong Kong reported that difficulties in understanding different English varieties were minimized by the provision of agendas and other necessary information to participants in advance of international meetings (Evans, 2013). Overall, the use of communication strategies can demonstrate the speaker's hope for a successful interaction and may help to build rapport with the interlocutor (Yoneoka, 2011).

Intercultural knowledge and understanding are also essential for successful business communication. According to Matsuda and Friedrich (2011), students should learn that English varietal differences go well beyond pronunciation and include values related to culture, language, and other factors. Students, who may have little experience outside their own

cultures, will benefit from gaining an awareness of cultural variations in communication styles (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013) and behaviors, as well as receiving opportunities to explore or even adjust their own when appropriate. For example, Du-Babcock (2013) found that in international meetings, Asian participants from Hong Kong and Japan took significantly fewer turns in speaking than their European counterparts from Finland and Sweden; instruction and practice could be given in turn-taking skills to address what may appear to be a shortcoming in participation in such meetings. Understanding that the international business community has its own culture is also necessary; being clear, concise, direct, and courteous (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Kubota, 2013), and having the ability to evaluate a situation to employ the most suitable medium, timing, focus, and style of communication for a particular audience in spoken and / or written communication (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013) are expected. Overall, students should be taught to objectively examine and understand their own cultures and the cultures they may have contact with; for an approach, see the plenary paper in this issue.

More research on English as a lingua franca in the workplace in Asia is necessary, including field research on the communication requirements for real business situations (Du-Babcock, 2012) and action research by teachers so that changes are suitable for their particular contexts can be determined (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011). In the meantime, teaching students communication strategies and intercultural understanding to more successfully use the English they are learning will begin to develop their intercultural communicative competence. Suggestions for effective classroom practice include those that can simulate intercultural business situations in some way, such as problem-based learning or case studies (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013); outside the classroom, internships in multinational companies and study abroad experience can help students to further improve (Du-Babcock, 2012). Possessing intercultural communicative competence may be of benefit for many high school and university students and current employees to be more prepared for the upcoming employment and business opportunities and challenges in the region.

Volume 4, Issue 2 begins with a paper from Richmond Stroupe, the plenary speaker at the 9th CamTESOL Conference. In looking at the necessary qualities that students will need to compete in an increasingly globalized market, he explains strengths other than language proficiency that language educators can develop in their students and describes programs where these qualities have been successfully developed.

The research section begins with an investigation by Simon Smith and Nicole Keng into the acquisition of Graeco-Latin origin words by three learner groups, each with different L1s containing differing levels of these words. The results offer insights for EAP instructors teaching academic English vocabulary, which is mainly of Graeco-Latin origin. In the second article, Chun-Chun Yeh examines the learning experiences and views of students regarding a podcast learning project for extensive listening. Students were provided scaffolding to achieve autonomy in choosing existing podcast resources for meaningful listening practice. The results reveal factors that were challenging and those that enhanced the learners' experience with the project.

In the teaching practice section, Asako Takaesu shows how TED Talks can be used as extensive listening assignments for upper-intermediate and intermediate level students. She further discusses ways to support lower-proficiency learners so that they may benefit from extensive listening. In the next paper, Oana Cusen explains how a project on child soldiers was designed and then successfully implemented in a high school English curriculum by using a project-based teaching and learning framework. Clear steps to teacher-supported learner autonomy

culminate in a poster presentation on a topic related to the project theme. In the third teaching practice paper, James Dunn advocates making use of students' semantic networks for more effective vocabulary learning. Providing students with opportunities to connect new words to their prior knowledge and experience makes the words meaningful to them. The issue concludes with a paper from Tim Marchand and Benedict Rowlett. By using digital media to deliver news articles and materials and to create a forum for their learners to express their views, they encouraged learner engagement in the course content outside of the classroom.

I would like to extend my deep appreciation to the members of the Advisory Board and the Editorial Board for their ongoing support of *Language Education in Asia*. We rely on the eyes of our Editorial Board for papers that offer practical recommendations for teachers in the region and are of interest internationally as well. The insightful comments from the Editorial Board contribute to the professional growth of those who submitted papers as educators, researchers, and authors.

Many thanks go to the Volume 4, Issue 2 editorial team, veteran Assistant Editor Deborah Sin and new Assistant Editor Keuk Chan Narith, Managing Editor Phanisara (Nina) Logsdon, and our new Editorial Assistant Visoth Nob, all of whom kept the publication process on track despite their already demanding regular work.

Thank you also to all of the authors who submitted papers for consideration for Volume 4, and congratulations to the authors whose papers are published in this issue. Your contributions to the body of knowledge in your areas of language education are much appreciated.

We continue to encourage submissions, particularly from regional and international authors working in the development context.

Finally, this issue is dedicated to the memory of Kevin Cleary, Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) President and a member of the LEiA Editorial Board. Kevin passed away unexpectedly and too young on January 16th, 2014.

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CamTESOL Conference Plenary Speaker

The Language Educator and Globalization: How Do We Best Prepare Our Learners?

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Abstract

The process of globalization and increasing interconnectedness through technology, business, and institutional exchange is leading to greater opportunities and mobility for students. In response, in an effort to adequately prepare learners, the nature of the language classroom is changing. While still based on fundamentals of improving linguistic understanding and proficiency, emphasis is increasing on the broader role of the language class and language educator in preparing graduates to enter a global workforce. As a result, the increasing number of expectations placed on our profession lead to new challenges and opportunities. How can language educators prepare students for regional and international opportunities in a time of fast-paced change, increased expectations, and global competition? This paper presents some current and innovative approaches which address the need for skills beyond general fluency in English, including emphasis on English for professional purposes, development of critical thinking skills, and increasing cultural understanding.

The effects of globalization have been well-documented and are far-reaching (Institute for the Study of Labor, 2008; Milken Institute, 2003; Mrak, 2000; Sapkota, 2011). Multinational companies, supply chains that span multiple countries and regions, regional and international trade agreements and an ever increasingly mobile workforce are commonplace. Politically and economically, international agreements bringing governments closer together are increasing in number and breadth (Burall & Neligan, 2001; Phillipson, 2001). Most recently, a number of countries around the Pacific are considering ratifying the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement, which would have significant consequences for some of the largest global economies (Congressional Research Service, 2013). Within two years' time, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states are planning further economic integration, which will also have economic, social, and political ramifications even beyond the nations in Southeast Asia (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008; Chia, 2013; Hansakul, 2013).

Contributions for this increased level of internationalization will be necessary from those in both the public and private sectors. Government officials will need to work more closely with their counterparts in other countries (Anderson, 2012; Council on Foreign Relations, 2012; U.S.

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State Department, 2012), and executives and managers in different business sectors will face increased and diversified competition (Dexter, 2004; Forbes, 2011; Institute for the Study of Labor, 2008; Kliesen, 2006; Lerche, 1998). Quite importantly, educators will be called upon to prepare each national workforce to rise to these challenges (Sahlberg, 2006; World Economic Forum, 2013). In particular, educators dealing with English language instruction will contribute by developing the proficiency of their learners to aid them in competing in a global environment which is increasingly relying on English as the international lingua franca (Dewy & Jenkins, 2010; House, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Ku & Zussman, 2010). Yet a focus solely on English language proficiency will leave learners lacking in the skills necessary to succeed in this competitive global employment marketplace. In this paper, other areas where English language educators should diversify their efforts are highlighted, along with programs successful in addressing each area.

In the business sector, proficiency in English as a second or foreign language matters greatly in the global economy, both to employers and to individuals (Forbes, 2011; Nickerson, 2005; Otilia, 2013; Phillipson, 2001). While standardized test scores remain important (Educational Testing Service, 2011), practical English language proficiency is becoming a more marketable skill for job-seekers (Otilia, 2013). Multinational corporations require employees with effective communication across their global operations; this points to the need for skills in multiple languages. Likewise, corporations are realizing significant economic benefits related to individual performance and institutions as a whole as the English and plurilingual skills of their employees improve (International Research Foundation for English Language Education, 2009). In a survey conducted by Forbes (2011), 106 senior executives of American companies with yearly revenues of $500 million or more indicated that issues related to language had become central to their effective functioning as global corporations. When asked, 65% admitted that language barriers existed, and that such barriers led to miscommunications (67%) and made collaboration more difficult (40%). At the same time, 71% suggested that executives in leadership positions increasingly required non-English skills, and many (66%) expected U.S. managers to gain minimal proficiency in the local languages where they were posted. A majority (68%) noted that cultural awareness / competence is also increasingly important (Forbes, 2011).

A clear need exists for increased English language proficiency in a number of sectors. Yet the question this paper poses is “Is English proficiency enough?” While a focus solely driven by increased hours of English language instruction at younger ages may result in a more proficient national population, other skills that are in as much demand (or more so) in a globally competitive employment market may be overlooked. A broader question for educators, learners and policymakers is what qualities are necessary for competitive workers to have over the next decade. How can language educators empower learners in this global context, and how can these skills be integrated into the language learning classroom? This paper will focus on skills that can add to the competitive advantage of language learners as they enter the global marketplace, namely the development of academic and workplace skills, including specific linguistic skills, critical thinking skills, and intercultural communicative competence.

Specific Linguistic Skills for Specific Purposes

English language instruction encompasses the teaching of English for a multitude of purposes. Jordan (1997) considered these differences, first beginning with describing English teaching for general or social purposes, which would include a four-skills approach. From this point, Jordan (1997) began to draw a distinction between English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). EAP stresses the development of language required in specific fields

of study, including professional discourse based on specialized lexical items and common forms of communication, and more generally, enhanced skills related to working with academic texts, engaging in research and taking part in class through activities such as posing questions and contributing to class discussions. In comparison, in ESP, the focus on specific skills necessary in specific workplace environments is the hallmark of this approach to language teaching (Orr, 2002).

This attention to specific skills necessary for workers in their professional environments is what formed the basis of the curriculum in the Lower Mekong Initiative Education Pillar English Project. The project focus is the development of professional communication skills for government officials in anticipation of the necessary requirements leading up to and after ASEAN integration in 2015 (Anderson, 2012; ASEAN Secretariat, 2009). A number of identified skills were highlighted as mid- to upper-level professionals and officials from one country begin working more closely and often with their counterparts in other ASEAN countries in the areas of health, the environment and infrastructure, most often making use of English as the language of administration. In order to meet their responsibilities both regionally and internationally, the capacity of these officials in actively engaging in meetings, presenting ideas and plans in meetings, seminars, and conferences, being able to read and draft documents, and contributing to research initiatives need to be developed (Anderson, 2012). Focusing on English language proficiency for general or social purposes would have been insufficient; what was warranted was a more targeted approach. The program, completed in 2012, was evaluated positively, and therefore led to a second phase, expanded in number of countries involved and variety of sectors served. This second phase of the Lower Mekong Initiative is to be completed in 2014 (Lower Mekong Initiative, 2013).

Critical Thinking Skill Development

Specific linguistic skills for specific purposes are one component for success in the global community, yet there are other skills which are equally important. At Soka University in Tokyo, Japan, the Economics Department initiated a project to determine what these attributes and skills are, and how their curriculum could better prepare the students they graduated (Honma, 2008). Faculty members from this department surveyed top Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE) companies in order to develop a graduate profile which would be attractive to these companies when searching for new employees. The qualities indicated included content knowledge and, more importantly, the ability to apply that knowledge in practice. English language proficiency, study skills (including research skills and time management) and international experience and cross-cultural understanding were also important. In addition, emphasis was placed on the development of critical thinking skills. It was not enough that graduating students had strong backgrounds in their content areas and could express themselves in English. Being able to analyze, apply concepts, synthesize information, and offer and support ideas and opinions was also valued.

The research on the importance and development of critical thinking skills is extensive (Bloom, 1956; Ennis, 1996; Facione, 1998; Willingham, 2007). While there has been much debate on the definition of critical thinking (American Philosophical Association, 1990; Bloom, 1956; Ennis, 1987; Facione, 1998), Ennis (1987) summarized the skill succinctly: Critical thinking is the process of incorporating the skills necessary to rationally decide what to do and believe.

Students accomplish this process informally on a daily basis. The challenge for educators is to develop these skills further over time in an academic context. This has been accomplished in the Economics Department at Soka University through the department's International Program,

which includes a strong EAP component focusing on the development of critical thinking skills (Honma, 2008). Critical thinking skills have often been developed at only advanced levels of instruction or applied through ad hoc activities. In the International Program and other programs at the university, critical thinking skills are dealt with in the same way as other skills, i.e., developed over time, from a basic to higher level, with level-appropriate language support and content (Stroupe, 2006).

A practical approach to the development of critical thinking skills can benefit from an illustration of Bloom's Taxonomy (Figure 1). Bloom (1956) initially presented his hierarchy of critical thinking skills beginning with knowledge (understanding content). With this knowledge, learners can then progress to the next stage, by expressing their comprehension of the knowledge (by summarizing, paraphrasing, or comparing and contrasting in one area to another) or applying what the learners have understood to a new context (Forehand, 2005). The three higher order thinking skills would require learners to analyze the knowledge more deeply, synthesize that knowledge with information from external resources by integrating it into a new form, and then finally, make judgments or evaluations with supporting evidence and documentation of their positions and ideas. A newer version of Bloom's Taxonomy renames the synthesis level of the original version and elevates that creative component in the critical thinking process (Anderson et al., 2001, as cited in Krathwohl, 2002). In the current paper, the focus is on the original version which was adopted in the current context due to its relevance to academic skills.

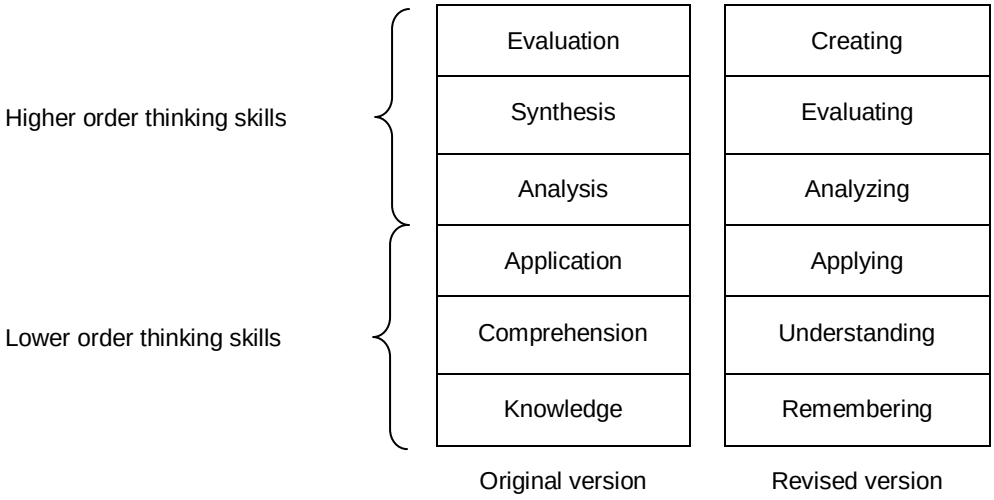

Figure 1. Comparison of Bloom's Taxonomy: Original and revised versions. From Forehand, M. (2005). Bloom's taxonomy: Original and revised. In M. Orey (Ed.), Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology. Retrieved from http://projects.coe.uga.edu/epltt/

Oftentimes, teachers can become disillusioned with focusing on the development of critical thinking skills in language instruction (or other) courses, lamenting their students' seeming inability to be able or to learn how to critically analyze. In many cases, this may be due to insufficient scaffolding or introducing linguistic skills or content knowledge beyond what the students are prepared to utilize. To overcome these challenges, some brief guidelines may be helpful:

- Critical thinking skill development should not be "saved" or allotted to only learners with advanced second language proficiency or content knowledge (Strauss, 2008; Stroupe, 2006, 2013; Willingham, 2007). All learners engage in critical thinking skills in their daily lives. The challenge for educators is to bring this dimension into the language learning classroom and expand on these skills, at all levels of language study.

- Tasks focusing on critical thinking skill development should be based on level-appropriate linguistic skills. Not all students have the linguistic skills or lexical knowledge to express judgment about, for example, the most effective method to reduce fossil fuel dependency and state their support of that position, regardless of the evidence they may have. Yet most lower-level proficiency students can often quickly gain the linguistic skills necessary to explain who their favorite actor is and why. While the sophistication of the language and content knowledge necessary for these two tasks can be quite different, the critical thinking skill is the same: Making an assertion and supporting that judgment with reasons (Figure 2). The basic linguistic structure (I think X because A, B, and C) is the same, while the content is different, based on the complexity and necessity of previous knowledge.

Lower level: **Topic: Favorite movie**	**Advanced level:** **Topic: Concept of supply and demand**
Knowledge • What is your favorite movie?	Knowledge • What does the concept of supply and demand state?
Comprehension • Summarize the story of your favorite movie. What happens first, second, and so on?	Comprehension • Explain how the concept of supply and demand operates.
Application • Think about the ending of your favorite movie. Are there any other possible endings?	Application • Considering the recent oil shortage, explain how the price of oil may be affected. Use specific examples to support your answer.
Analysis • Compare and contrast your favorite movie with your partner's. What are the similarities and / or differences?	Analysis • Compare and contrast the effects of the oil shortages of the 1970s and early in the 21st century.
Synthesis • Use the Internet and investigate the life stories of the director and main actors in your favorite movie and present that information in some form (in a written report, discussion, or presentation, for example).	Synthesis • Research recent developments in the Middle East, and summarize predictions of the price of oil over the next 24 months.
Evaluation • Explain why this is your favorite movie. Use specific examples to support your opinion.	Evaluation • What is the most effective mechanism to reduce extreme fluctuations in the global price of oil? Use specific examples to support your answer.

Figure 2. Practical examples of application of Bloom's Taxonomy: Lower and Advanced Language Proficiency Levels.

- Tasks focusing on critical thinking skill development should also be based on level-appropriate content knowledge (Stroupe, 2006, 2013; Willingham, 2007). Also apparent from the actor / fossil fuel example above, the content knowledge necessary (and resulting lexical and linguistic complexity) to offer a judgment and support for the latter topic is far more demanding than the former. It is important that educators recognize this difference and focus critical thinking development tasks on content knowledge or interests readily accessible to learners, either through their previous studies or personal interests and experiences.

- Critical thinking skill development should be explicit in the course curricula. While there is debate as to whether critical thinking skills are most effectively taught inductively or deductively, explicit focus in the curriculum by educators is essential. Explicitly including the development of critical thinking skills as an educational goal "legitimizes" the process and encourages the inclusion of discussions of critical thinking into the professional discourse of those involved (Stroupe, 2006, 2013).

The International Program has realized significant success since its inception: The overall number of graduates from the Economics Department securing positions in Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE) companies has been increasing, and incoming students began to choose economics as their major because of the reputation of this program. Subsequently, the program was used as a model for a similar content-based program in Japan-Asia Studies, a university-wide academic program, and most recently, a new English-medium department.

Increased Cultural Awareness

In addition to needing task-specific language skills and the ability to critically analyze, our learners, because of increased mobility and international communication, will more often be working with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds from their own. Fantini (2005) points out that in order to interact with others from diverse cultural backgrounds appropriately, a level of intercultural communicative competence is necessary in addition to linguistic proficiency. Many language educators recognize this importance and include discussions of cultural differences in their course curricula. Yet like critical thinking skills, developing the ability to understand and have empathy for others in different cultural contexts should be seen again in the long-term, progressing over time, supported by scaffolding and recycling.

Increased cultural awareness was one of the key components of the Program for Regional and Educational Exchanges for Mutual Understanding (REX Program) which has been implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Japan, and local governments abroad since 1990. The REX Program was developed to promote Japan's internationalization and provide unique opportunities for teacher development. Through this program, native Japanese speaking English teachers in junior high and high schools in Japan have been selected to live in a variety of countries to teach Japanese at the secondary level. The REX Pre-Departure Program was designed to introduce departing teachers to Japanese language teaching methodology, cultural expectations of the educational context to which they were traveling, and support with daily life issues which they would face when living abroad.

In addition to teaching Japanese, another major component of the assignment abroad for these teachers was to teach about Japanese culture. This task may seem straightforward, yet the REX participants quickly realized that while they implicitly understood the nuances and practices of their own culture, making this knowledge explicit in a teaching situation was quite challenging.

In addition, while the participants could readily describe cultural activities, because the meanings of these activities were often implicit, oftentimes they found it difficult to explain the reasons behind cultural traditions in which they had engaged for most of their lives. A framework for analysis of the implicit which would lead to explicit instruction was needed.

When discussing culture, the first question which comes to mind is indeed, what is culture? Again, this may seem obvious, but upon closer inspection, the answer seems elusive. How for example, is the exchanging of business cards culturally bound when the "same" item is used both in Japan and in other countries?

What is necessary is a definition of culture. While many are available, the definition that seemed particularly useful to the REX Pre-Departure Program is as follows:

> Culture… is the way of life of a society,… consist[ing] of prescribed ways of behaving or norms of conduct, beliefs, values, and skills, along with the behavioral patterns and uniformities based on these categories -all this we call "non-material culture"-plus, in an extension of the term, the artifacts created by these skills and values, which we call "material culture." (Gordon, 1964, pp. 32-33)

As can be seen with Gordon's definition, the concept of culture can be all-encompassing. For instructors in the classroom, it is problematic to teach everything about culture, so using a framework based on this definition as a pedagogical tool can help learners gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of culture.

From Gordon's definition, four key components were identified. The first is beliefs, including individual and social beliefs of members of a particular group, and the societal values on which these beliefs are based. These beliefs and values are central to the framework and inform the behaviors of members of a society, the second component in the framework. Beliefs help define what behaviors are expected, rewarded, or discouraged in a particular society. Yet behaviors are not decontextualized: Behaviors are associated with the third component, cultural artifacts, the "material culture" which Gordon refers to as the objects in a culture which members can see, touch, or feel. Finally, there are social institutions, which support and perpetuate social beliefs and values and cultural practices. Among the most influential social institutions are the family and community, educational systems, religious organizations, government, and business. Media can also play an important role, providing a method through which social institutions can further emphasize cultural practices. While it is at times difficult to identify all four components of the framework in a cultural activity, three of the four are typically readily identifiable, with beliefs always present, and can provide the basis for further analysis.

An illustrative example can be seen in the aforementioned common and quite important practice of exchanging business cards in Japan. Two components of the framework are readily identifiable. The artifact in this example is the business card itself. Additionally, when business cards are exchanged in Japan, there are a multitude of behaviors expected to occur related to the seemingly simple action of presenting the card: using both hands, holding the card in a particular manner, with the name of the presenter facing the recipient, and accompanying the actions with a bow based on the status of those involved. These behaviors are based on the Japanese societal belief of mutual respect and status in a relationship, with the accompanying belief of politeness in business interactions. This is such an important aspect of the business community that companies in Japan have lessons for their new recruits about how to properly

exchange business cards in varying situations, thereby providing the fourth component in the framework, the institution that perpetuates the cultural practice.

Using beliefs as the beginning foundation for analysis, REX participants who will be living in western countries are provided with Kohls's (1984) *The Values Americans Live By* as an introduction and point of comparison between eastern and western cultural values (with the explanation that American values should not be seen as the equivalent to western values, but rather as a point of departure for discussions and further investigation). With this understanding of beliefs, the participants then began to objectively examine another culture, in this case that of the United States, based on events or social characteristics which shape cultures in different ways. Some influencing factors on culture could include history, the educational system, religion, ethnic diversity, and the family. In the same ways that these factors can shape culture, these can also be utilized to perpetuate or actively change culture over time. After completing an examination of one aspect of another culture, participants then had the knowledge and experience necessary to reflect back on their own culture, moving from a subjective understanding to a more objective understanding which could be explicitly shared with others, namely their non-Japanese students in their destination countries.

As shown from the points discussed above, the REX participants moved though a step-by-step process of understanding, reflection, and sharing of cultural values and associated behaviors, artifacts, and institutions. Each step in the process provides a foundation or basis for greater understanding in the next step. First, participants are provided a definition of culture and a framework with which to further analyze cultural beliefs and behaviors, in this case the framework based on Gordon's definition of culture. After providing a general understanding of values / beliefs of the target culture (in this case Kohls's article), additional, more specific cultural information from the target culture (readings, videos, web-based material, etc.) can be provided in a specific area (education, religion, historical events, etc.). After analyzing this cultural information using the framework, participants can then use the same framework and targeted area to reflect back on their own culture. Consolidation of these steps can be accomplished through a final project such as a presentation of a cultural aspect of the learner's own culture or of the target culture. In the case of the REX participants, this consolidation took the form of a demonstration lesson that would be used when explaining Japanese culture with their students in their destination country.

Initially, such analysis of the REX participants' and other cultures was challenging, but through each week of the Pre-Departure Program, the process became more familiar. Eventually, the participants began to discuss, question, and consider cultural influences which they could observe, not as an assigned task of the program, but because they had developed and internalized this approach to understanding the cultures with which they came into contact.

Conclusion

Increasing interconnectivity through globalization, digitization, and international activities is creating a more competitive environment for our learners. The responsibility is placed on educational systems and educators to ensure we prepare our students adequately for the expectations which they will face after leaving our classrooms. While global opportunities are increasing, access to those same opportunities is becoming increasingly competitive. As educators, it is necessary to better prepare graduates for global competition in a fast-changing business environment. A focus on developing critical thinking skills along with relevant linguistic skills is important. Graduating globally competent learners also includes developing their greater understanding of multiple cultures along with intercultural communicative

competence. The global marketplace will only become more integrated and competitive in the future. Therefore it is incumbent upon us as educators to recognize our students' needs and prepare our students to excel and realize success in their future careers.

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Research

The Acquisition of Classical Origin Words by Chinese, French, and Finnish Learners

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Abstract

This comparative study evaluates the vocabulary knowledge of comparable groups of English learners from three L1 backgrounds: French, Finnish, and Mandarin Chinese. An investigation of differences in vocabulary knowledge revealed that vocabulary of Greek or Latin origin is much more likely to be known by French speaking students than words of non Graeco-Latin origin. Finnish students did much better on words of non Graeco-Latin origin, although they still outperformed the French speakers on Graeco-Latin words. The performance of the native Chinese speakers was the worst of the three groups, and there was no significant difference with this group between the two sets of words. The findings have clear implications for the teaching of academic English vocabulary in EAP settings where students share an L1. In mixed L1 settings, instructors may need to take account of variation in vocabulary knowledge among different L1 student groups.

As is widely known, a large proportion of English vocabulary is of Graeco-Latin (GL) origin. Most native English speakers would agree that frequent use of GL words could be an indication of a greater vocabulary and indeed of a higher level of education. Corson (1982, 1985), posited the existence of a *lexical bar* in English, whereby members of certain social classes, who do not acquire the L1 vocabulary necessary to express more abstract technical and academic thought, are denied full access to the curriculum as they go through the school system. In English, a high proportion of scientific and technical terms take the form of GL words. GL words are more difficult to acquire inasmuch as specialist vocabulary tends to represent more difficult concepts.

Whilst social class, prosperity, and a range of other environmental factors may influence the degree to which Asian learners acquire English, it is of course extremely unlikely that such factors have any impact on the type of vocabulary learned. However, the lack of GL cognates in a given language will probably place its native speakers at a disadvantage when learning English vocabulary. It can plausibly be argued that a lexical bar similar to Corson's exists for certain EFL learners; the height of this bar would be in inverse proportion to the density of GL

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cognates in the language. In this study, it is predicted that native speakers of Asian languages which have very few GL cognates will have a lesser knowledge of English GL words than speakers of languages that do attest such cognates. The Asian learners investigated in the study are Chinese; in future work, it will be of interest to study Asian learners whose L1 does incorporate GL cognates, such as Khmer and Filipino (which have GL cognates borrowed via French and Spanish respectively).

The study looked at 3 groups: learners with L1 Chinese (Mandarin), French, and Finnish. In French, almost all the lexical stock consists of words of Greek or Latin origin. Finnish also has a substantial number of such words, for example, *tragedia*, *komedia*, *optimisti*, *pessimisti* (although not as many as occur in Indo-European languages). Chinese, which belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, has no more than a handful of GL loanwords, such as *yōumò* (humor) and *luójí* (logic), but these are borrowed from English in any case. It is therefore plausible that Finnish learners will have a better knowledge of words of Greek or Latinate origin than their Chinese counterparts. One would expect French learners to have a better knowledge of these English words than Finns or Chinese.

It makes intuitive sense that the use of L1 knowledge will be of assistance in acquiring L2 vocabulary cognates. Cobb (2000, p. 316), for example, found that French-speaking students' English vocabulary depended so heavily on their knowledge of L1 cognates that they could "answer questions about English words that they have not necessarily learned through exposure to English." Equally intuitively, the cognate knowledge may not be readily available to Chinese students. The present study seeks to confirm these intuitions by measuring and comparing the GL and non-GL vocabulary knowledge of three representative groups.

It was hypothesized that, of the three L1 groups studied, Finnish students would exhibit the best knowledge of academic English vocabulary on a test including words of mixed origins (GL and non-GL). On a test which included only GL words, it was predicted that the French speakers would perform best because French has more GL origin words. It was further hypothesized that the Chinese learners would perform the worst on both tests.

These hypotheses can be expressed as follows:
H1. All words: Finnish > French > Chinese
H2. GL words: French > Finnish > Chinese

In H1, "All" refers to the set of GL and non-GL words, that is, the set of all English words.

Several studies have investigated the academic word knowledge of learners from particular L1 backgrounds. Henriksen (2012, for Danish) and Nurweni and Read (1999, for Indonesian) both found that breadth of knowledge of academic vocabulary (vocabulary used in the writing of students or academics) was surprisingly low. However, no special attention has been paid in the literature to learners' knowledge of GL words across different L1 groups. The present study compares the students' knowledge of GL and non-GL words from an academic word list, the British Academic Written English corpus (BAWE), as well as the relationship between this knowledge and the L1 background. The BAWE corpus is described by Nesi and Gardner (2012): it contains 3,000 British university student writing assignments at first or upper second standard (graded at 60% or above), totalling 6.5 million words, in four broad disciplinary areas (Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Life Sciences and Physical Sciences) and across four levels of study (undergraduate and taught masters level). Thirty main disciplines are represented. The word list used is described in the Methodology section below.

Vocabulary Tests

The first task was to determine the appropriate tool or test for quantifying vocabulary knowledge. Whilst of course the desired test would be as accurate as possible, the research interest was in the mean performance of a group (of speakers of a particular L1), not that of individuals. The need for a tool which could be administered quickly to a large group of students outweighed the need for recording the performance of individuals. Any tool which relied on translation from or to the participant's L1, such as the Computer Adaptive Test of Size and Strength (CATSS), described by Laufer and Goldstein (2004) was ruled out, because the purpose of the task was to compare different L1 group performances. If such a tool had been used, different versions for French, Finnish and Chinese would have been needed, and it would have been impossible to guarantee translational equivalence between English and the three L1s.

Tests which attempt to quantify vocabulary depth are in fact making an estimate of the number of words a testee is likely to know, rather than actually counting them. Essentially, a number of words at more than one frequency band are sampled, in order to ascertain a learner's vocabulary size or level. The level or size can then be used to predict what the learner can do with the language: 2,000 words for basic communication, 5,000 words to read authentic texts, and 10,000 words to cope with a university course in English (Schmitt, Schmitt, & Clapham, 2001).

The Vocabulary Size Test (VST; Nation & Gu, 2007) and Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT; Nation, 1990) measure vocabulary breadth by the use of distractors. A typical VLT item provides the testees with six words at a given frequency level, along with definitions of only three of the words. They must then select the correct definition of the three words, ignoring the three distractor words. Figure 1 shows a typical VLT item.

1. original	☐	complete	1. apply	☐	choose by voting
2. private	☐	first	2. elect	☐	become like water
3. royal	☐	not public	3. jump	☐	make
4. slow			4. manufacture		
5. sorry			5. melt		
6. total			6. threaten		

Figure 1. A VLT item from the 2,000 word level.

In the VST, the testees are given one word, an example of the use of the word in a sentence, and a choice of four definitions for the word of which only one is correct.

Although the validity of the VST and VLT has to some extent been established by studies involving post-test interviews (Schmitt et al., 2001; Vilkaitè, Gyllstad, & Schmitt, 2013), these tests are quite time-consuming to administer, permitting only a relatively small sampling rate. As with all distractor-based tests, problems are bound to arise. On the VST found at http://my.vocabularysize.com, for example, the correct definition for the item *many* is "a large number," as can be seen from Figure 2. However, it is impossible to imagine that a learner of any nationality would know the distractor "enough" and not know "many"; thus, it is not the knowledge of the target item that is actually being tested here. On the same test, the correct definition for the item *hutch* is given in four words (cage for small animals), while all three distractor definitions contain 10 or more words, so that the test-taker is led visually towards selection of the key.

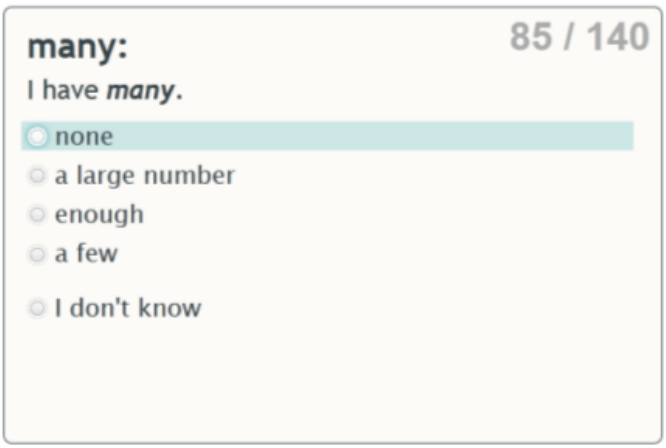

Figure 2. A VST item from http://my.vocabularysize.com.

Yes / No Tests

The yes / no test format was first described as a means of measuring L2 vocabulary knowledge by Meara and Buxton (1987). Essentially, it consists of asking the testees whether or not they "know" the words in the sample. The advantage of the yes / no test is that it is easy to administer to a large number of testees, and a large number of items can be tested. The test is easy to develop (there are no test items to write or contexts to come up with) and it can be marked quickly and automatically.

There are disadvantages, too. It has been claimed that testees of certain L1 backgrounds may have different response patterns; for example, Cobb (2000) found that native Arabic speakers were more likely to report that they knew words that merely resembled words they had actually encountered. Since Arabic speakers were not being studied, this was not of great concern in this research. More disconcerting is a tendency reported by Meara and Jones (1990) for French speakers to report that they are familiar with English words which are identical in form to equivalent French words, even though they have not met the word in English. In the present study, the GL words are often French cognates; *infiltrate*, for example, is *infiltrer* in French, while *transformations* is spelled the same in both languages. As noted below this may have had an impact on standard deviations among French participants in this study.

Clearly, there is a risk with the yes / no test that certain testees might respond dishonestly, claiming to know words that they have never seen before. For this reason, Meara and his colleagues (Huibregtse, Admiraal, & Meara, 2002; Meara & Buxton, 1987; Meara & Jones, 1990) adopted the use of pseudo-words, which are mixed in with the real words in the sample. Since the pseudo-words are not part of the lexicon, the testees cannot possibly know them; if they do claim to know any, a penalty can be applied which causes an appropriate impact on the number of actual words claimed to be known.

The simplest way to apply a penalty is to subtract the number of false alarms (the number of pseudo-words that the testee claims to know) from the number of real words claimed to be known (Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2012). This can be represented as (1), where *P*(*h*) represents the probability that the testee knows the word.

(1) $P(h) = h - f$

However, Huibregtse, Admiraal, and Meara (2002) noted that this way of calculating the penalty does not properly reflect individual response styles. In particular, a testee responding conservatively (only responding when absolutely certain of knowing the item) will get a lower overall score than someone inclined to take risks and claim knowledge of words which they are not familiar with. This may apply even though the actual vocabulary knowledge of the two testees is the same. One correction algorithm that does take better account of individual response styles is Signal Detection Theory Index (I_{SDT}), also presented by Huibregtse et al. This is calculated as per (2).

$$(2)\ P(h) = 1 - \frac{2h(1-f) - (h-f)(1+h-f)}{4h(1-f) - (h-f)(1+h-f)}$$

In the present paper, penalties were calculated using both the h - f and I_{SDT} algorithms, and some comparison of the two approaches is provided in the Results and Discussion section.

Methodology

Vocabulary knowledge of the two groups was tested by the yes / no test, in which learners are shown sets of words at different frequency levels. The tests include pseudo-words of the same approximate length and apparent morphological complexity as the real words being shown. The learners were asked to indicate which words they knew, and a penalty was applied for claiming to know a pseudo-word.

Data were collected from students following Engineering or Business Studies courses in one of two universities: one in the UK, the other in Finland. All were enrolled in Academic English programmes designed to support their main course of study, and the English teachers administered the tests. The students were in seven class groups: four in the UK and three in Finland. Participants were selected randomly from Academic English programmes at the two universities. There were 19 L1s in the group of 125 students which took part in the tests, but only responses from French (n = 21), Mandarin Chinese (n = 33), and Finnish (n = 41) native speakers were analysed. These three L1s were selected because they constituted the largest L1 groups, and because they contain different proportions of GL vocabulary: high, in the case of French, medium (Finnish), and low (Chinese). The students had IELTS scores of between 5.5 and 7, which represents a broad range of proficiencies: this is acknowledged as a limitation of the study, but as discussed in the Limitations section, does not invalidate the work, because it is the difference in knowledge of GL and non-GL vocabulary that is investigated, rather than overall vocabulary knowledge.

Words were selected from the BAWE corpus, which contains academic writing graded 60% or above by students at UK universities. Because the goal of this study was to compare knowledge of academic English (rather than general English) among the L1 groups, a first thought was to use the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) as the word source. However, it turned out that almost all AWL words are of Graeco-Latin origin, whilst what was needed was a source which could provide both GL and Germanic words used in academic writing, at a range of frequencies. Reference was made to the list of 21,000+ word types that appear 10 or more times in the corpus. The most frequent, of course, is *the*, while *barbarous*, *clothe* and *orator* are among those at the lower end of the list; thus, it is not so much a list of academic words as a list of all words that are likely to occur in academic writing.

A pre-pilot study revealed that items towards the bottom of the BAWE frequency list were too difficult for the students, yielding few correct answers. Since the high frequency words would

clearly have been too easy, mid-range items, occurring 34 times in the corpus, were selected. At this level, there were considerably more GL than Germanic words. The procedure used for word selection was to scroll down the list (which is in an arbitrary order within the frequency blocks) until a Germanic word was encountered, select that, then select the GL word immediately following. Non-standard words (such as *rev/min*) and proper names were not selected. Figure 3 shows excerpts from the beginning, middle, and end of the wordlist spreadsheet.

	A	B
1	WORD	no. occurrences
2	the	492272
3	be	289343
4	of	271079
5	and	208696
6	to	191632
7	in	153337
8	a	136398
9	that	79337

10013	craftsman	34
10014	acquaintance	34
10015	duchess	34
10016	lust	34
10017	infiltrate	34
10018	homogeneity	34
10019	noisy	34
10020	outright	34
10021	seventeenth-century	34

21588	bewildered	10
21589	carve	10
21590	barbarous	10
21591	well-ordered	10
21592	luxemburg	10
21593	filmer	10
21594	rendering	10
21595	commonsense	10
21596	coulter	10
21597	clothe	10
21598	orator	10
21599	uncomplicated	10

Figure 3. Excerpts from the beginning, middle and end of the BAWE word list frequency spreadsheet. The middle section was actually used.

In cases where the authors were not certain of the etymology of a word, a check was made at an etymology website (www.etymonline.com). Words were chosen without taking account of part of speech or other lexical features.

Twenty-five GL words and 25 Germanic words from the middle of the BAWE list were selected. A random word generator (http://nexi.com/fun/) was used to generate sets of pseudo-words by seeding it with the selected words. In this way, lists of "Graeco-Latin" pseudo-words and "Germanic" pseudo-words were created. The complete list of words used (50 real words and 25 pseudo-words) is shown in Table 1. Readers may wish to evaluate for themselves the plausibility of the pseudo-words.

Table 1
Items Used in Yes / No Test

Graeco-Latin	Germanic	Graeco-Latin Pseudo-Words	Germanic Pseudo-Words
flour	dare	dectic	skewner
noise	craftsman	agity	outrick
infiltrate	lust	antastic	breatner
transformations	outright	filtual	grear
deconstruct	breadwinner	incial	headwing
antagonistic	greatness	decise	limess
cyclotron	limestone	intabity	heatness
agitation	handy	impectic	sendy
anoxia	mast	infilogy	pright
speciality	sliding	trimate	decial
habitual	bowl	cerfecial	impear
imperfection	skewness	catate	flother
triplet	sender		womess
kilometre	healer		
filtration	spear		
intercultural	fur		
pleased	weep		
catastrophe	bother		
abbey	brick		
ceremonial	rot		
memoir	killer		
suitably	folk		
ensue	akin		
primatology	womb		
incisor	yogurt		

Procedure

The yes / no tests were administered anonymously at the end of ordinary English teaching sessions. Students were asked to sign an agreement form if they wished to take part, and all those present did. No incentive or payment was offered for participation. On the answer sheets (separate from the agreement form), students were asked to note their native language.

The 75 words and pseudo-words were shuffled using a random number generator (www.random.org). Participants were told that not all the words to be displayed were real words, and that they should avoid speaking to each other or registering surprise. Each word was displayed in a large font on a PowerPoint slide for 5-6 seconds. Participants then had to tick the appropriate cell in a column headed "Yes" if they knew the word, and one headed "No" if they did not know it.

After the results had been tabulated, composite scores for each student were computed using both the h - f and I_{SDT} hit rate calculation methods, as previously explained, for GL words and Germanic words. The mean score among all participants of a given L1 was also recorded.

Results and Discussion

It was found that that GL words are much more likely to be known by French speaking students than non-GL words. Finnish students did much better on words of non Graeco-Latin origin, although they still outperformed the French speakers on all vocabulary. The performance of the native Chinese speakers was the worst of the three groups, and there was no significant difference with this group between the two sets of words.

The first hypothesis, regarding knowledge of "all" words (both GL and Germanic), was thus confirmed. Finnish learners scored highest on the yes / no test, followed by French learners, with Chinese in third place. The finding applied to both scoring algorithms, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Hit Rates for All Words

	Mean *h* - *f* rate	*SD*	Mean I_{SDT} rate	*SD*
Finnish	0.48195	0.0717	0.54440	0.0720
French	0.36761	0.0602	0.46880	0.0543
Chinese	0.27313	0.0747	0.39687	0.0690

The second hypothesis, that the French learners would take first place when it came to GL words was, however, not supported. Table 3 shows that Finnish learners still scored highest when scored only on GL words, indicating that they know more GL words than the other two groups of learners.

Table 3

Hit Rates for GL Words

	Mean *h* - *f* rate	*SD*	Mean I_{SDT} rate	*SD*
Finnish	0.44993	0.0796	0.52071	0.0854
French	0.42481	0.0548	0.50793	0.0469
Chinese	0.25199	0.0739	0.39094	0.0813

However, the results also indicate that French learners have a better knowledge of GL words than non-GL words, while the reverse is true for Finns (even though the latter group know more overall in both categories). This finding, along with the two hypothesis outcomes noted above, is presented in Figure 4 in percentage form.

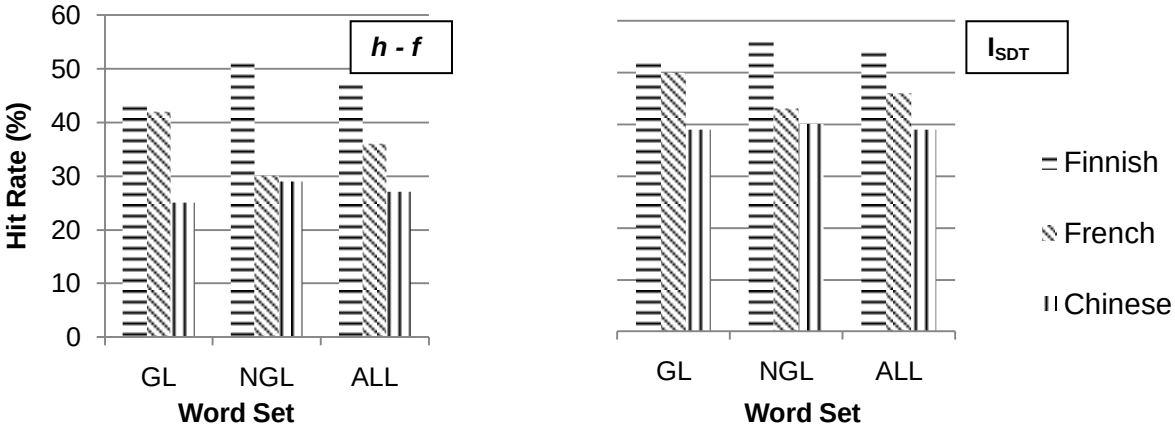

Figure 4. Hit rates for all word types, all L1s.

Figure 4 shows the relative performance of the three language groups on GL and non-GL words. It can be seen that the same findings broadly apply, whichever algorithm (*h - f* or I_{SDT}) is used for calculating scores.

Table 4

Paired T-Test, GL Words vs. non-GL Words

		Non-GL vs. GL difference	*SD*	Sig.
Finnish	*h - f* rate	.06473	.07024	.000
	I_{SDT} rate	.05041	.07960	.000
French	*h - f* rate	-.12876	.07955	.000
	I_{SDT} rate	-.07624	.05518	.000
Chinese	*h - f* rate	.04703	.09024	.005
	I_{SDT} rate	-.00518	.13099	.819

The results of the paired t-test shown in Table 4 confirm that the relative performances of Finnish and French learners on GL and non-GL words differ significantly ($p < .05$), no matter which penalty scoring algorithm is used.

For Chinese learners, a relatively small difference between GL and non-GL word knowledge was observed in Figure 2. Table 4 shows that this difference is significant ($p < .05$) under the *h - f* penalty calculation, but not significant when I_{SDT} is used. As was mentioned in the introduction, Huibregtse et al. (2002) claimed that the I_{SDT} algorithm takes better account of individual response styles than does *h - f*. It is probable, therefore, that a difference in individual response styles would account for the significances found under the two algorithms in the Chinese case, perhaps reflecting that this cohort tended to respond to unknown words with differing degrees of confidence.

In the above tables, standard deviations are presented alongside the results. It is interesting to note from Tables 2 and 3 that standard deviations on the French performances are especially low for the GL words, suggesting that it is a feature of the L1 (probably the existence of GL cognates) rather than individual performance which is mostly influencing the mean French score. For the French performance on non-GL words (as indeed for the Finnish and Chinese

performances across the board), the standard deviations indicate that there is a reasonable spread of "yes" and "no" responses. This may be an effect of the tendency of French learners, previously noted, to report that they know any word which resembles a GL word found in French itself.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, no prior evaluation of vocabulary knowledge or language proficiency generally was carried out. Clearly, the strongest participants were the Finns, and the weakest were Chinese learners. If the proficiency of individuals had been established in advance (by some standard independent of the yes / no vocabulary test), it would have been possible to normalize their yes / no performances based on that information. This procedure would have preempted a possible objection to the validity of the results: namely, that the performance of learners of a given L1 is good on a category of words merely because learners in the country where that L1 is spoken are comparatively good at English. Certainly there is evidence that the Finnish people have strong English skills. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012), for example, report that in the Finnish international companies they studied, 70% of internal communication in English was between non-native English speakers. Finland, according to Saarinen (2012), has become known as "Little England" on account of the high number of English-taught university programmes, second only to Holland in continental Europe, and is the current second choice for those not accepted to study in the UK.

It is important to note, however, that even without advance knowledge of proficiency and consequent normalization, patterns of performance in GL and non-GL words do emerge fairly clearly anyway. A learner's overall vocabulary level depends on his or her overall language proficiency, but variation in the proportion of GL to non-GL words is more intuitively ascribed to the learner's particular L1 than to proficiency.

Some readers may view the findings as somewhat predictable. Is it so surprising that participants with GL cognates in their own L1s know more GL cognates in English? First, it was actually the Finnish participants who turned out to know the greatest number of GL words, while the proportion of GL words to Germanic words known was lower than the French speakers. Furthermore, this study serves as a useful pilot to further planned research, described in the next section.

Some further limitations of the study arise from the participant sample and setting. As with many studies of this type, the results would be more reliable if the number of participants had been greater. Furthermore, the participants were enrolled at universities in Finland or the UK. There might have been some variation because of the different provenance of the data; for example, the learning participants received might differ from one academic English programme to another. To reduce the effect of possible artefacts, the study would ideally have been conducted at a single institution, or at least at two institutions in a single English-speaking or non English-speaking country.

Although participation in the research was voluntary and was authorized by the rather stringent ethics procedures by which the authors are bound at their institution, there is a possibility that some participants might have felt some coercion to participate, and this may have had an impact on the reliability of the data. However, the students were told clearly that the activity would not affect their grades.

Conclusions and Implications for Future Work

This study focused on the variation in GL and non-GL word knowledge among learners of different L1 backgrounds. The participants were studying either business or engineering, in roughly equal numbers. In a future study, the authors will probably hypothesize that students of engineering will have larger GL vocabularies than business students, and that this is to do with the more technical vocabulary needed for engineering studies. If that hypothesis is supported, there will be a clear case for differentiation of the types of vocabulary taught in these and, potentially, other disciplines. This will have interesting implications for the on-going EGAP / ESAP debate.

The implications of the findings for teaching EAP in EFL contexts where students share an L1 are that vocabulary teaching and learning should take account of the particular needs of the L1 learner group. In settings where classes include mixed L1 groups, instructors may need to be aware of the variation in perceptions of word difficulty among students of different linguistic origins.

It has been demonstrated that some learners of some L1 backgrounds are more likely than others to need particular help with words of Graeco-Latin origin. It is therefore worth tuning those learners' vocabulary exposure to this kind of lexis. Practitioners could also explicitly teach Greek and Latin compound elements (e.g., *peri-* and *tele-*, *-meter* and *-scope* respectively), by basing tasks and activities on them to encourage productive learning and context guessing. This suggestion builds on the work of Zheng and Nation (2013) on the word part technique, a technique for learning vocabulary through the use of morphemes which are common to different words, especially GL words.

The authors of the present article have found from their own teaching practice that the word part technique works and is appreciated by students. Students enjoy, for example, the task of trying to predict the meaning of *periscope*, given their knowledge of *telescope* and *perimeter*.

When conducting the yes / no tests in class, the authors found that the students responded well and were intrigued by the task. Some students were apparently amused by some of the more obvious non-words, and very engaged when more difficult words or less obvious non-words appeared. There appears to be no existing literature on the possibility, but it does seem plausible that the yes / no test could be used as an occasional classroom activity, probably with immediate feedback. Further research would need to be done to see if there were any positive learning outcomes.

It was stated in the introduction that the GL vocabulary of English tends to represent scientific, technical, and overall more difficult concepts for native speakers than non-GL words. In this study, it has been shown that learners of certain L1 backgrounds also find GL words more difficult than speakers of languages such as French, in which almost all the lexical stock is composed of GL words. There is a statistically significant difference in learners' knowledge of GL and non-GL words, and this difference depends on the GL / non-GL status of the learner's L1.

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An Investigation of a Podcast Learning Project for Extensive Listening

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Abstract

This paper investigates a podcast learning project integrated into an English speaking and listening class for the purpose of promoting extensive listening and fostering independent learning. The study collected data through a questionnaire, students' podcast diaries, and observation notes on student project presentations, seeking to examine students' learning experiences as well as their views of using podcasts for pedagogical purposes. Results suggested that students were strategic in choosing podcasts suitable for their interests and proficiency levels. Overall, they found learning from podcasts not only convenient but also useful in enhancing their language proficiency and world knowledge. Their general satisfaction with the experience can be attributed to factors including freedom of choice, meaningful practice, and close integration with the syllabus. However, students also experienced frustration with podcasts containing unscripted authentic content delivered at a fast speech rate.

Input is considered critical in second language learning (Zhao & Lai, 2005). Many teachers strive to maximize target language input that suits students' proficiency levels and engages their interests. However, they cannot hope to provide sufficient input within the time constraints of the classroom. It is therefore imperative for teachers to find ways to extend learning beyond the classroom. In recent years, researchers and practitioners have started to recognize podcasting as a technological tool that can be effectively incorporated into language teaching and learning. The biggest benefit of podcasting is that it can provide an unlimited amount of authentic target-language input across a wide range of subjects (Chinnery, 2006). Furthermore, it can be used on portable devices such as mp3 players to facilitate an on-demand and on-the-go learning approach (McQuillan, 2006; Stanley, 2006; Stoks, 2005). This paper describes a podcast learning (PL) project integrated into an English speaking and listening class for the purpose of encouraging students to engage with listening materials of their own choice. The study collected data from multiple sources to examine students' learning from existing podcast resources. It also explored factors affecting students' choice of podcasts and the perceived benefits and problems of using podcasts for pedagogical purposes.

Literature Review

Extensive Listening and Independent Learning

Modeled on the extensive reading approach (Susser & Robb, 1990), extensive listening (EL) is defined as referring to an individualized listening activity with large amounts of target language input of learners' interests and at their levels. The value of EL lies in increasing "automaticity of

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recognition of words in their spoken form, in turn leading to improved aural fluency and thus improvement in overall comprehension" (Brown, 2007, p. 15). Ridgway (2000, p. 180) also regarded automaticity as a key element in language acquisition and held that practice plays the most important role in achieving automaticity: "Practice is the most important thing. The more listening the better, and the subskills will take care of themselves as they become automatized." Renandya and Farrell (2011, p. 56) advanced a similar belief: "just like reading, listening is best learnt through listening."

Another rationale for encouraging EL is the concept of "language learning for life" (Field, 2008, p. 4). Field argued that instructors need to provide a type of learner training that "involves preparing learners so that they can take full advantage of the sources of linguistic information that the real world provides" (p. 5). In other words, this approach aims to equip learners with the ability to continue learning after they complete language courses and when the teacher is not there to assist them. In this approach, reading and listening are two natural means of extending learners' knowledge through independent learning, the latter having an extra benefit of enhancing spoken fluency (Field, 2008). In this sense, EL can be used as a means to foster independent learning, and for teachers and students seeking to take advantage of new technology, podcasts can provide the rich target language input needed in the EL approach.

Podcasting in Educational Settings

Podcasts can be understood as online "audio or video broadcasts that contain a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed, allowing users to 'subscribe' to the podcast" (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007, p. 165). Once subscribed, podcast programs can be automatically delivered to the user's computer or portable media player when new episodes are released. Using existing resources is one of the two main potential uses for podcasting described in Rosell-Aguilar's taxonomy (2007). Existing podcast resources for language learning can be further divided into two main categories. The first is content created by native speakers for the consumption of native speakers, such as news podcasts released by broadcast media. The second category is teaching content created for language learning. Rosell-Aguilar (2007) sub-classified this category into complete courses and supporting materials either for a particular audience or for independent learners. The latter subgroup of resources—supporting materials for independent learning—can arguably be most readily used by classroom teachers for providing target language input. The PL project described in this paper featured podcasts in this category.

A major consideration in using podcasting in education is that it allows flexibility. The podcasting literature has determined that time, location, and pacing as the dimensions where this flexibility can be realized (Salmon & Nie, 2008). As a result of the time flexibility of podcasting, a learning activity is no longer constrained by time and location (Hew, 2009). Learners can access learning materials on the move, assuming they own personal mobile devices such as mobile phones and personal media players. A further advantage of podcasting is the provision of bite-sized learning opportunities (Lee & Chan, 2007), enabling learners to take advantage of idle time for constructive learning purposes. In addition to this mobility, having the ability to replay podcasts has also been found to improve learning (Salmon & Nie, 2008). The facility to download podcasts and listen repeatedly allows learners to work at their own pace to achieve the desired learning outcomes. These three dimensions of flexibility also contribute to learners' choice and control, which are considered key elements of learner autonomy and independent learning (Benson, 2001; Pemberton, Toogood, & Barfield, 2009).

In recent years, podcasting has been adopted in a wide variety of educational contexts. In subject courses, podcasting is often used to deliver recorded lectures and speeches (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007), enrich distance learning, facilitate self-paced learning, aid slower learners

and to further develop advanced and / or highly motivated learners, among other uses (Walls et al., 2010). In language learning classrooms, podcasting has also been adopted for training in specific language skills, such as pronunciation (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009), oral and aural skills (Abdous, Camarena, & Facer, 2009; Chan, Chi, Chin, & Lin, 2011) and listening strategy training (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007). These studies however, primarily involved either teacher-created or student-produced podcasts. Although these projects have generally met with positive reactions, the resources and technologies involved may not be accessible and the time and effort invested may not be viable for all teachers. It is therefore proposed that teachers use existing resources for designing a podcast project that both engages student interest and promotes EL. This kind of project can be as simple as the podcast homework suggested by Field (2008), where the teacher selects a weekly podcast for students to download and study during the week. Students listen to the podcast as frequently as needed and provide feedback at the end of the week. For more advanced and highly motivated students, teachers can design a learner-centered podcasting project, carefully integrating in-class activities to guide and scaffold students' exploration of podcasts for language development. This study presents the implementation of such a learner-centered podcasting project and investigates students' perceptions of its advantages and problems, seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. How do EFL university students use online podcast resources for listening practice?
2. How do they perceive the use of podcasting for educational purposes?

Methods

Context of the Study and Participants

The study was conducted in an English speaking and listening course at a public university in southern Taiwan. The course was mandatory for first-year English majors and was also open to all other students on an optional basis. Among the 23 undergraduates registered for the course, 13 were English majors and 10 were non-English majors. Their estimated English competence levels ranged from low-intermediate to low-advanced. None of the students had used podcasting for English learning purposes previously.

Design and Implementation of the PL Project

This podcasting project was designed to be closely integrated with the coursework, including an orientation, student sharing of their PL experience, teacher-directed podcast sessions, diary writing, and an oral presentation on their learning outcomes. First, an orientation session was given in the beginning of the semester to demonstrate how to find and use podcasts. In Weeks 2 and 3 of the project, students were invited to share initial podcasting experiences to facilitate peer learning and identify podcasts that fit their interests and proficiency levels. Furthermore, teacher-directed podcast sessions were designed with the aim of exposing students to a wide variety of online audio resources. In these sessions, the teacher also demonstrated ancillary learning materials such as listening comprehension quizzes, transcripts, and vocabulary lists. Additionally, students were asked to keep a diary of their PL experiences (see Appendix A for the suggested format for diary entries). The diaries served the purpose of developing students' independent learning skills and facilitating the teacher's evaluation of student progress (Kemp, 2010; Yeh, 2008). Finally, at the end of the two-month project, students were asked to summarize their PL experiences and to give a five-minute oral presentation to the class about the podcast most useful to their English learning. The presentation included the podcast's basic data and an explanation of how it was used for language learning, followed by an evaluation of the overall experience.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected for this study included questionnaire responses, student podcast diaries and the teacher-researcher's notes on students' PL project presentations. First, an anonymous survey was conducted at the end of the project using a four-part questionnaire (Appendix B). Part A focused on students' prior podcasting experiences and current podcasting practices. Part B, using a 4-point scale, investigated factors affecting students' podcast subscriptions. Part C focused on supplementary activities that students performed to facilitate podcast listening. The final section used a 5-point Likert scale to measure students' level of agreement with eight statements concerning their PL experiences. This part also included two open questions to elicit students' perceptions of the advantages and problems of PL. Second, student diaries kept for the project were collected and prepared for analysis. Finally, the teacher-researcher's notes on students' project presentations were also used to triangulate the data. The notes included the featured podcast, reasons, and additional notes.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated on the responses to the scaled questions in the questionnaire. The responses to the open questions, together with qualitative data from podcast diaries and teacher-researcher's notes on student presentations, were read, coded, and then categorized according to the themes developed through analysis.

Results

Questionnaire Findings

Twenty-two students completed the survey. Survey findings indicated that students' podcast listening behavior varied widely (Table 1), but the majority subscribed to between 2 and 5 podcasts (77%), listened to podcasts 2 or 3 times a week (55%), and spent less than 30 minutes on each occasion (59%).

Table 1

Podcast Use Patterns

Subscribed podcasts	1 (14%); 2-5 (77%); 6-10 (9%)
Frequency (per week)	1 (9%); 2-3 (55%); 4-7 (27%); more than 7 (9%)
Time spent each listening session	Less than 30 min. (59%); 30 min – 1 hr (27%); more than 1 hr (14%)

As to the factors affecting a student's decision to subscribe to a podcast, "interest in the subject" of the podcast was found to be the most important, followed by speaking speed, content difficulty, availability of transcripts, and episode length (Table 2).

Table 2

Factors Affecting Decision to Subscribe to Podcasts

Factor	*M*	*SD*
Episode length	2.64	0.85
Speaking speed	3.05	0.84
Interest in the subject	3.23	0.97
Content difficulty	2.91	0.61
Accent (American, British, or others)	2.32	0.89
Format (audio or video)	2.23	1.11
Transcript (with or without)	2.77	1.15
Language (English or bilingual)	2.18	1.10

The questionnaire also explored whether and what supplementary activities were performed during or after podcast listening. Results showed that students conducted multiple activities to facilitate learning from podcasts (Table 3), suggesting a rather serious attitude towards and heavy investment in the PL project. It can also be observed that two of the three highly frequently performed activities—consulting a dictionary (86%) and listening repeatedly (82%)—involved tackling immediate listening problems and seeking overall textual comprehension.

Table 3
Supplementary Activities to Facilitate PL

Activity	Number of students	%
Consulting a dictionary	19	86%
Taking notes	10	45%
Searching for supplementary information	11	50%
Learning new words	18	82%
Repeated listening	18	82%

The next part of the questionnaire explored students' perceptions of the podcasting activity. With the first three items concerning the perceived benefits of podcasting, students indicated strong agreement. In particular, 95% of the students agreed that listening to podcasts enriched their world knowledge, while 86% agreed that the activity improved their English listening ability. Approximately two-thirds of the students (63%) strongly agreed or agreed that the activity increased their English learning motivation. Items 4-6 explored the students' perceived difficulties of using podcasts for language learning. In terms of technology, approximately three-quarters of the students (77%) found it easy to learn to use podcasts, while two students (9%) reported some difficulty in mastering the technology. Regarding the fifth and sixth items, half of the students found it easy to locate podcasts that suited their interests, while 59% encountered minimal difficulty in finding podcasts suitable for their proficiency level; for both items, almost one-fifth of the students (18%) indicated they found finding suitable podcasts difficult. However, the PL project was, overall, an enjoyable experience for the class (82%). In addition, more than two-thirds of the students (68%) indicated that they would continue to use podcasts for English learning purposes.

The questionnaire contained two open questions to encourage the students to suggest what, in their view, were the biggest strengths / limitations of using podcasts for pedagogical purposes. A summary of student comments about the advantages of podcasting is given in Table 4.

Table 4
Summary of Comments Regarding the Advantages of PL

Strength	Number of responses	Example comments
Language learning	7	It can improve my English listening ability.
Knowledge	7	I can get the latest information.
Convenience	6	You can listen to it whenever you want.
Variety	2	It has a variety of categories which we can choose.
Others	3	It's free.

While seven students referred to language improvement as a major advantage of PL, an equal number reported that podcasts provided opportunities to learn ideas, new information, and world news. Convenience was also viewed by six students as a big advantage of PL. They praised podcasts for easy access and automatic updates. They could download and listen to podcasts "at any time" (S2), so PL was "not limited by time and place" (S6). In addition, two students appreciated the variety afforded in the podcast world. One explained that "I can try to find one that suit my interest. I will not bored when listening to them" (S8).

Finally, the students also named problems they had encountered in PL, which can be generalized into three categories: language, technology, and personal (See Table 5).

Table 5

Summary of Comments Regarding the Problems of PL

Problem	Number of responses	Example comments
Language	6	Speed of talking is fast.
Technology	6	Because I don't have iPod, I can only listen those podcast programs through my computer.
Personal	5	Sometimes I just don't want to listen to it.

The students encountered language problems, including rapid speech, lack of understanding, and lack of transcripts. In particular, several students reported feeling frustrated when they could not understand the content even after repeated listening. Six students complained about various technology problems, caused mainly because they did not own iPods and had to spend long periods in front of their desktops for podcast listening. The five comments in the Personal category were more varied. One student had difficulty finding suitable podcasts. Another seemed to be overwhelmed by the amount of accumulated content from podcasts with daily updates and another mentioned the lack of interaction.

Observations From Student Presentations and Podcast Diaries

Analysis of student presentations and podcast diaries provided further information about students' learning strategies and experiences. It was found that among the most useful podcasts named in the project presentations (see Appendix C for a list of student-selected podcasts), podcasts targeted at ESL learners were chosen the most frequently ($n = 9$). An equal number of students chose to feature news podcasts, while a further three chose education podcasts such as TED Talks. The students provided reasons for their podcast choices, including the podcasts came with transcripts, were of short duration, had speakers with a British accent, were interesting, were not too difficult and were recommended by the teacher. Several generalizations can be made from the students' choice of podcasts. First, textual support was apparently very important to these intermediate English learners. In fact, of all the participating students, only three chose podcasts that did not include episode transcripts. Second, the students were observed to be careful and strategic in managing this PL project. In addition to finding podcasts covering interesting topics, they took care to choose podcasts of short duration (typically five to six minutes per episode) and of moderate difficulty (at a reduced speech rate or of bilingual instruction in English and the students' mother tongue, Chinese). Many also seemed to depend on teacher recommendations. More than half of their favorite podcasts were featured in the teacher-directed podcast sessions. Finally, half of the students chose podcasts delivered in British English accents. Although this may in part reflect the teacher's recommendations, some of the students explained that their choice was motivated by their

curiosity about British accents (as contrasted with American English, normally adopted as the model for English learning in Taiwan), indicating that podcasts can indeed provide opportunities for explorations of a wide range of not just topics and interest areas, but accents and linguistic differences as well.

Finally, observations from student diaries revealed their exploration process in the podcast world. In the beginning, they had to navigate through this unfamiliar technology and explore what it had in store for them. Several students reported experiencing a period of difficulty before finding a perfect fit for their interests and language levels. However, the diaries revealed that most of the students sought to assess podcasts according to their own criteria so as to find a podcast neither too challenging nor too easy for their language levels, as shown in the following excerpts (unedited):

> Sometime I try to "BBC discovery" but it is nearly half hours and some speakers speak too fast. After listen two times, I give up.
>
> I change my mind to switch VOA [Special English] to this program because the special English is really slow and sometimes I felt bored.
>
> I found that I can almost understand what the hosts are talking about. Next time I will pick some more challenging podcasts to enhance my listening ability.

The students explored not only available podcast selections but also the tool's capabilities. For example, one reported his attempt at taking advantage of the mobility afforded in PL, although with a less than satisfactory result:

> Because I have to go back to my hometown with my family and sweep the forefathers' grave, I just download the MP3 into my cell phone that I can listen to it when I am in car. . . . however, I was attacked by my little brother who try to interrupted me in the car. Furthermore, because of the car swaying and the boring long trip, sometimes I can't focus on. Finally, I consider that I still prefer staying before computer much than listening by cell phone.

Despite the various challenges, the students generally seemed to enjoy learning from podcasts. One student commented in the diary that the project felt "less like an assignment." Another left a note in the questionnaire to express her appreciation of the experience:

> Roughly speaking, it's a wonderful experience of listening to podcast. I think I will use my free time to listen it and keep finding interesting podcast!!

Discussion

In terms of student satisfaction, the self-reported data collected in the present study revealed that, overall, the PL project was successful. This success may be attributed to three factors: freedom of choice, meaningful practice, and close integration with the syllabus. First, the students were given complete freedom to choose the podcasts to subscribe to, the number of episodes to listen to, and the amount of time to spend on listening. In line with research on free voluntary reading (Judge, 2011; Susser & Robb, 1990), this freedom of choice should contribute to the students' overall satisfaction with the experience. Furthermore, with the freedom of podcast choice, the students were given opportunities to do meaningful practice instead of mere mechanical drills. In addition to learning to listen, they listened to learn more about their areas of interest, assisted by a wide range of available podcasts. Such meaningful practice is

widely recognized to be engaging for learners and indispensable in second language acquisition (Renandya & Farrell, 2011; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Finally, as described in the Methods section, this PL project was designed to integrate closely with the speaking and listening course through measures including introductory orientation, in-class podcast sessions, constant reminders from the instructor, peer experience sharing, podcast diaries, and project presentations. All these activities served to guide students through the process of learning to use podcasts and help them recognize podcasting as a useful educational tool. Such teacher guidance and careful integration with the syllabus have been identified as contributing to effective podcasting use for learning purposes (Abdous et al., 2009; Chan et al., 2011; Copley, 2007; O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007).

Although generally satisfied, the students encountered some difficulties and frustrations during the learning process. In particular, they seemed to experience considerable frustration with podcasts delivered at a rapid speech rate. These podcasts tended to contain unscripted authentic content created for native speaker audiences. This problem with authentic texts has been recognized in the literature on listening instruction (Hinkel, 2006; Vandergrift, 2004). To help alleviate the problem, teachers can consider learner training in metacognitive strategies (Cross, 2011; Goh, 2008; Vandergrift, 2007). Several commonly taught strategies include activating background knowledge about the topic, anticipating the language that might occur in the text, writing down a word to check its meaning later, and note-taking. Alternatively, a more structured approach to podcast listening, as detailed in a later section, can be adopted.

Regarding the concept of flexibility, this study found that PL may allow learners more flexibility in time and pacing, but not in place. This relative lack of mobility in place may be accounted for by two factors: (a) mobile device ownership and technical capabilities and (b) study habits and purpose. Although this study did not survey mobile device ownership, the students' complaints about having to sit for long periods in front of computers suggested that they either did not have handheld devices enabling mobile learning or they were not familiar with the technicalities of transferring audio files to their mobile devices. This corroborates findings in previous research showing the impact of technical capabilities on podcasting use (Abdous et al., 2009). Furthermore, students may need a quiet place for podcast listening, particularly when English is not their first language and when they see podcast listening as a serious learning task requiring concentration. In addition, listening to podcasts on the move makes it difficult to perform supplementary learning activities such as taking notes and consulting dictionaries, which the students reported performing with high frequency.

Pedagogical Suggestions

For teachers who wish to use existing podcast resources, several suggestions are offered. Teachers should first familiarize themselves with the technology and available resources in order to introduce learners to the basics of podcasting. Furthermore, while giving learners freedom to explore the podcast world on their own, teachers should emphasize the varying quality of existing podcast resources. They can also help develop learners' online information literacy skills by demonstrating how to evaluate podcasts using cues such as descriptions and customer reviews (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Furthermore, this paper contends that integration with the syllabus is key to ensuring the success of a PL project. Therefore, teachers should consider how they can organize the course schedule and assignments to guide learners through the learning process. One option is to adopt a project-based model as featured in this study to motivate learners, encourage student ownership in the learning process, and facilitate peer sharing and continuous reflection upon the experience (Stoller, 2006). With lower-level students, teachers may consider adopting a more structured approach, particularly in the beginning stage of the project. For example, teachers can assign a podcast for the whole class

to download and listen to. They can also demonstrate how to use ancillary materials such as episode transcripts, if available, to enhance learning outcomes. Once students become more familiar with the technology and its potential uses, they can be encouraged to explore and expand their listening repertoires.

Limitations and Conclusion

The present study does have limitations, perhaps the major one being a reliance on self-reported data. It should also be noted that variables such as learners' English proficiency and technical capabilities cannot be controlled, but it is likely that individual students approached podcasting differently depending on factors such as areas of study, personal interests, language competence and English learning motivation. While this study has identified general usage patterns and perceptions of podcasting among EFL university students, case studies would further advance understanding of individual strategy use in learning from podcasts.

The amount of exposure to target language input is generally recognized as an important predictor of language achievement levels. Using podcasts as EL material involves only minimal technological knowledge, but it can provide a motivating variety of resources and facilitate learners' engagement with listening materials at a time and place convenient to them. It is hoped that this study will stimulate additional consideration of the use of podcasts in listening instruction and aid students in leveraging this technology for second language acquisition.

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Appendix A
Suggested Format of Podcast Diary Entry

Name of the podcast:
Duration: _____ minutes per episode
Frequency: Daily? Weekly?
Language: English? Bilingual (English plus Chinese)?
Category: Education? Music? News? Others?
Difficulty: Easy? Medium? Challenging?
This week's podcasting experience (50-200 words):

Appendix B
Questionnaire on Podcast Learning

Part A: Prior Experiences and Current Practices

1. Is this the first time you use podcasting for English learning purposes?
   □ Yes □ No. I used it for English learning purposes before this class.
2. How many podcasts are you currently a subscriber to?
   □ Only 1 □ 2-5 □ 6-10 □ 11-20 □ more than 20
3. During this podcasting project, how often do you listen to podcasts?
   _____ time(s) a week
4. In average, how much time do you spend each time you listen to podcasts?
   _____ (hours or minutes)

Part B: Factors in Choosing a Podcast

How important are the following factors in your choosing a podcast to subscribe to?

Factor	Not at all important	Slightly important	Fairly important	Very important
Length of each episode				
Speaking speed				
Interest in the subject				
Content difficulty				
Accent (e.g., American, British, or others)				
Format (audio or video)				
Transcript (with or without)				
Language (e.g., English or bilingual)				

Part C: Podcast Learning Activities

What learning activities do you do when (or after) listening to podcasts? Check all that apply.

□ Consulting a dictionary
□ Taking notes
□ Searching for supplementary information online
□ Learning new words
□ Repeated listening
□ None of the above
□ Others, please describe:

Part D: Podcast Learning Experiences

Please indicate (✓) whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Listening to podcasts improves my English listening ability.					
2. Listening to podcasts increases my English learning motivation.					
3. Listening to podcasts enriches my world knowledge.					
4. It is easy for me to learn the technology for using podcasting.					
5. It is easy for me to find podcasts that suit my interest.					
6. It is easy for me to find podcasts that suit my level.					
7. Listening to podcasts is an enjoyable experience.					
8. I will continue to use podcasting for English learning purposes.					

9. What was the best thing about or biggest strength of podcasting as a learning resource?

_____

10. What was the worst thing about or biggest limitation of podcasting as a learning resource?

_____

Appendix C
Podcasts Featured in Students' Project Presentations

- BBC 6 Minute English, available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/6min
- BBC Learning English for China, available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/aab
- CNN Student News, available at http://rss.cnn.com/services/podcasting/studentnews/rss.xml
- English as a Second Language Podcast, available at http://www.eslpod.com/website/index_new.html
- Poem of the Day, available at http://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/audio?show=Poem%20of%20the%20Day
- TED Talks (video), available at http://feeds.feedburner.com/tedtalks_video
- VOA Words and Their Stories, available at http://learningenglish.voanews.com/archive/learningenglish-programs-radio-words-stories/latest/978/987.html

Teaching Practice

TED Talks as an Extensive Listening Resource for EAP Students

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Abstract

This study examines how TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) Talks, used as an extensive listening material, affected college students' listening skills, and explores strategies to tailor the activity for lower-proficiency students. The qualitative data analysis, based on two surveys and students' journal entries, indicates that students felt the lectures improved their listening comprehension, enhanced their motivation, and accustomed them to listening to a variety of English accents. Finally, assisting students to select lectures appropriate to their comprehension levels and conducting various types of scaffolding activities for lower proficiency students are discussed.

TED Talks and EAP Students

Since 1984, TED Talks has featured lectures from around the world on technology, entertainment, and design. These lectures are available to the general public and have been used by educators since going online in 2007 (TED Talks, n.d.). Free transcripts in English and subtitles in over 40 languages accompany most of the lectures, delivered by native and non-native English speakers.

At a private liberal arts college in Tokyo, TED lectures were used as an extensive listening resource in a new academic speaking and listening course in conjunction with journal writing. As the lectures were a core listening task, their efficacy was gauged for future classes.

To accomplish this, the following research questions were developed:
1. How do students view the effectiveness of the activity in regards to their listening skills?
2. What other benefits are engendered?
3. If the activity does not improve listening skills, what are the causes and how could these causes be addressed?

The paper will begin with an overview of some recent trends in the teaching of listening in the EFL / ESL arena. The definition, purpose, and benefits of extensive listening practice will be explored, followed by details of how the TED lectures were incorporated into an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. Finally, survey results on students' perceptions of the efficacy

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of the activity and strategies to facilitate the task for students at lower comprehension levels will follow.

Literature Review

Listening as Part of EFL / ESL Teaching and Views on Listening Processes

Referring to the paucity of attention allotted to listening practice in the foreign language classroom, Nunan stated, "Listening is the Cinderella skill in second language learning. All too often, it has been overlooked by its elder sister—speaking" (2002, p. 238). Foreign language teaching mainly focuses on productive skills: speaking and writing. Listening and reading, considered secondary skills, are often neglected, although they provide essential input to learners and therefore are vital to their productive skills. However, listening is currently receiving more attention (Field, 2002; Nunan, 2002; Wallace, 2010).

The two prominent views on the process of listening influencing language pedagogy since the 1980s are the bottom-up top-down processes (Nunan, 2002, p. 239). The former view holds that listeners' understanding of what they hear begins with the smallest units of sounds. These sounds are combined to form words, phrases, clauses, and sentences to become concepts. In this process, listeners apply various types of knowledge in a "hierarchical" manner in order to make sense of the incoming message (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005, p. 24). The top-down-process view, on the other hand, holds that listeners actively reconstruct the meaning of incoming sounds using their pre-existing knowledge of context (Richards, 2003).

Most researchers concur that both processes are necessary for effective learning (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Nunan, 2002; Wallace, 2010). As decoding alone allows learners only literal interpretations of the input, learners need to be guided to use what they already know to help them make sense of what they hear (Wallace, 2010). When students appear to lack contextual knowledge, some form of schema-building activities is recommended before the listening process starts to help learners prepare for a more meaningful listening experience (Richards, 2003).

Increased Use of Authentic Materials

Another trend in the teaching of listening is the increased use of authentic materials as opposed to scripted and / or graded materials (Field, 2002; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). The argument is that learners should be exposed to real-life input because scripted materials are devoid of the redundancies of informal speech. Field (2002) also stated authentic materials afford examples of "hesitations, stuttering, false starts, and long, loosely structured sentences" (p. 244) which characterize natural speech, and advised exposing students to such materials in the early stage of their learning.

Field (2002) further argued that learners need practice and strategies in dealing with texts where they have only partial understanding of what they hear; this is what they encounter in real life. Since many non-native speakers do not understand everything they hear, they need to make guesses and they should be encouraged to do so. All learners "need to be shown that making guesses is not a sign of failure" (Field, 2002, p. 247), but is vital in comprehending real-world input. The practice of extensive listening is effective in exposing learners to real-life input (Renandya & Farrell, 2010).

Definition, Aim, and Benefits of Extensive Listening

Renandya and Farrell (2010) defined extensive listening as "all types of listening activities that allow learners to receive a lot of comprehensible and enjoyable listening input" (p. 5). They

argued that listening might be best learned through listening, just as advocates of extensive reading believe "reading is best learnt through reading" (p. 3).

The aim of extensive listening is to develop "listening fluency," which is presumed to assist learners to improve automatic processing of the target language when done properly (Waring, 2008, p. 8). Choosing listening materials appropriate for the level of learners is important. Waring (2008) stated that listening materials should be easy enough for learners so that they "understand 90% or more of the content"; otherwise, they can become frustrated and can gain very little. However, he also pointed out that sometimes the complexity of the material is compensated for by the interest and background knowledge students have.

Extensive listening practice also helps students acquire more vocabulary, recognize various accents, and improve their pronunciation and speaking (Renandya & Farrell, 2010). Moreover, extensive listening is believed to augment students' motivation (Reinders & Cho, 2010). Field (2002) stated that students are generally not daunted or discouraged by authentic texts but feel motivated by obtaining unaltered information. Once such motivation is aroused, learners tend to pursue learning on their own and often maintain the new learning behavior regardless of the presence of teachers and others (Brown, 2002).

Motivation

In foreign language acquisition, motivation plays a pivotal role and is regarded as the universal principle that prompts learners to take independent action (Dörnyei, 2001). Learners can be motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, depending on the situation and individual traits, but often these two factors are interrelated. In their study on student blog-making projects, Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010) reported that the majority of their students were primarily motivated by internal factors and illustrated how this is related to autonomy:

> Students were motivated by intrinsic factors like sense of achievement, self-motivated corrections . . . and [this fact] seems to vindicate the position taken by Dörnyei (2001) and Deci and Ryan (1985) that intrinsic motivation is a fundamental construct in the development of learner autonomy. (p. 15)

Thus, it is essential to create a learning environment that fosters a sense of achievement and self-motivation, leading students towards autonomy.

Background for the Study

Speaking and Listening (S&L) Course

Freshmen in the intensive English program have 15 hours a week of English, most of which are dedicated to reading and writing, to prepare for future lectures in English. The S&L course is designed to establish a foundation for these core classes, and aims at assisting students to actively participate in and lead discussions as well as give presentations. As most of the hours in the S&L course are used to develop students' productive skills, it was felt they needed additional exposure to authentic speech outside the classroom.

Objectives for Assigning TED Talks as Outside Classroom Listening Practice

There were two objectives for assigning this activity:

1. To improve students' listening skills through exposure to authentic speech.
2. To offer students enjoyable and informative lectures that would motivate them to pursue tasks on their own, hopefully beyond the course.

Procedure for a Listening and Writing Activity Using TED Talks

Prior to assigning students the TED Talks task, 3 class hours were devoted to listening practice, as outlined below:

- Present "lecture language" (phrases that indicate the overall structure of lectures)
- Teach note-taking skills
- Provide listening practice with pre-recorded lectures, followed by comprehension quizzes
- In the third class, introduce two preselected TED Talks. Give tips on choosing appropriate TED lectures, based on the length, lecturers, genres, etc. Assign the tasks of selecting lectures and keeping a listening journal.

In their Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ), students summarized lectures in 100 words and added reactions / comments in 50 to 100 words (see Appendix C). They took notes while viewing the lectures and submitted them with the journal. As an optional entry, students were asked to record how many times they had viewed a particular lecture and how long the task took. The journals were evaluated by engagement, rather than quality, so students received full marks for completion of the tasks.

Students brought their LLJs to class to share with peers in small groups. If time allowed, some instructors had students give brief reports on their LLJ in groups or to the whole class.

Students also filled in self-evaluation forms (Appendix D) to track their progress and submit at the end of the course.

Methods

Participants

The course was offered to 468 freshmen whose average age was 18; 349 were upper intermediate (average total TOEFL score: 514; listening: 52) and 119 were intermediate (average total TOEFL score: 443; listening: 45).

Data Collection

Two student surveys were administered, one at the beginning and one at the end of the term:

Survey 1. The first survey was given to obtain background information on students' habits for improving their listening skills, and their perceptions of their listening abilities. This survey was used as a reference and was not thoroughly analyzed for this paper.

Survey 2. The second survey (Appendix A) was given to all students to gauge their perceptions of the efficacy of the course, including the speaking portion. The survey consisted of three parts: the course in general, the speaking portion, and the listening portion. In the listening part, three closed questions and one open-ended question were asked. Out of 468 students, 303 responded. For this study, qualitative responses from the listening part of the survey were inductively read through and coded, isolating themes of interest. Data was separated according to upper intermediate and intermediate proficiency levels. The listening journals were also analyzed to confirm these themes.

Findings

The coding and analysis of the results of the second survey and students' listening journals generated the following salient themes: 1) listening comprehension skills, 2) motivation, and 3) authentic listening material.

Each of these themes is separately reported for the upper intermediate and intermediate levels with tables and qualitative data based on students' survey responses and journals. Students' unedited comments are also provided.

Listening Comprehension Skills

Upper-intermediate. As Table B1 (Appendix B) indicates, 78% of the upper-intermediate level students perceived that the S&L course helped them improve their listening skills; 82% agreed that the LLJ activity improved their lecture listening skills. One student stated, "Lecture Listening Journal is very meaningful because it makes us listen carefully to the lecture and that improve our listening skills." Another student said, "At first it was very difficult for me to understand English lectures. However, as I took more S&L lessons and listened more TED talks, I came to understand them much better."

Intermediate. Table B2 (Appendix B) indicates that the majority of intermediate students (74%) also perceived that the course helped them improve their listening skills; 76% said that the LLJ activity improved their lecture listening skills. One student said, "Using TED is the best way for me to learn how to speak English. It is so exciting and gave me various thinkings."

Motivation

Upper-intermediate. Table B1 (Appendix B) shows 85% of upper-intermediate students wanted to continue watching online lectures in the future. One student stated that the process of selecting and viewing lectures helped him to choose his major. He wrote, "TED.com gave me many topics that attracted me greatly. This site helped me pick up some majors that I will specialize in."

Many students expressed intentions of incorporating the task into their daily lives. One student commented, "I was impressed by listening to the lecture. I want to continue to watch online lectures like TED everyday during summer vacation."

Intermediate. Table B2 (Appendix B) indicates 77% of the intermediate students also intended to visit TED.com after the course. One student said, "TED was a big discovery for me. I think it is very useful. I want to continue to use it." Another commented, "At first, I was very hard. I did not understand what speaker says. However, I became to be able to understand spoken English a little. Now, I want to listen to English more."

Analysis of students' journals also revealed that some students were deeply affected by the content of the lectures, which inspired them to pursue topics introduced in the lectures. A student who had watched *Nadia Al-Sakkaf: See Yemen Through My Eyes* (Al-Sakkaf, 2011) stated she felt that the speaker's country was truly on the move for change and that the existence of women like Nadia would encourage many people. She intended to check the *Yemen Times* website (http://yementimes.com) and learn more about the country from alternative media. Another student stated that she was stimulated by a speech about school lunches by Ann Cooper. This student researched and presented on food education later in the course.

This last point seems to support the view of Dörnyei (2001) and Deci and Ryan (1985) that once motivated, students act independently.

Authentic Listening Material

Upper-intermediate. A number of students recounted that the TED lectures were realistic representations of speeches and applauded the value of being exposed to such listening materials. One student commented, "TED was very good way to train listening skills . . . I learned how to catch up with fast speed speaking." Another student welcomed the variety of English accents being spoken.

Intermediate. Intermediate students also agreed that TED lectures offered authentic English. One student stated, "I like it very much because most teachers speak English easily to us, however, we can listen more natural English in TED."

Discussion: Helping Low-Proficiency Students Cope Better

As has been illustrated, the results of the survey and student journals entries indicate that the majority of the students at both levels regarded the activity favorably. However, a more careful analysis of the data points to some issues to be addressed.

Speed of Speech

Speaking speed needs to be assessed when choosing lectures, especially for lower-proficiency students: fast speakers were a big stumbling block for many of them. Although many upper-intermediate students appreciated the challenge of the task, some with weaker listening skills were frustrated or discouraged to the point of giving up. One intermediate student recounted, "I hesitated to do LLJ at first because I couldn't catch up with the native speaker's speeds and couldn't understand what lecturer said. It took me a long time to take notes and write summary and reactions."

Some students seemed to reach a certain point where a faster speech rate first causes lower comprehension, and soon almost no comprehension (Renandya & Farrell, 2010). At this stage, the task becomes ineffective and can be counterproductive. The instructors for this course misjudged the varying degrees of students' proficiency in listening comprehension and also applied the same approach to different levels of students.

Selecting the Lectures

Some students indicated in the survey that time constraints they had from working on other assignments given in the intensive program and failure to choose lectures appropriate for their levels deprived them of the benefits of the tasks. To address this, a list of level-specific lectures could be prepared and initially offered rather than having students choose lectures themselves. Although such lists as "Top 10 TED Talks" (Deubelbeiss, 2008) are available, these lists do not indicate the degrees of difficulty of the lectures. Thus, a list that accounts for speed, accent, and vocabulary complexity should be prepared.

Need for Scaffolding Activities

The survey also revealed that after the LLJ activity is assigned, scaffolding activities in class are a requisite to address the issues students encounter. Field (2002) stated the most important aspect of a listening class is that of "diagnosing" where the communication breaks down and tackling the problem (p. 246). Students' awareness of and practice on this type of problem need to be heightened. One of the activities Field (2002) suggested is a dictation exercise where students

write a number of dictated sentences "containing examples of the weak forms such as /wəz/ for 'was', /tə/ for 'to', /ʊ/ for 'who' so that they can interpret them correctly the next time they hear them" (p. 246). Without such scaffolding activities, merely exposing students to substantial amounts of extensive listening will yield little, if any, positive benefit. Student progress should be regularly monitored by paying more attention to verbal cues and journal entries to identify problem areas. As many mini-lessons as time allows should be given to address such problems.

Pre-Listening Tasks

The degree of anticipation should be maximized. As Lingzhu (2003) pointed out, expectation plays a key role in listening comprehension. Thus, pre-listening activities should precede listening tasks to prepare students for what they will hear. Such activities should be clearly demonstrated and rehearsed in class so that students can conduct them on their own before they view lectures outside the class. A list of questions such as the following can be used prior to the listening:

- What do you know about the topic?
- What does the title indicate? What can you infer from it?
- Who is the speaker? Do a quick search on the speaker. What is his / her field and what is he / she noted for?
- What do you think the speaker is going to say?
- What words can you guess the speaker is going to use? Jot down the words in English as well as in Japanese, look up the English equivalent if you have written the words in Japanese, and check the pronunciation.

Lingzhu (2003) also stressed the importance of giving students contextual knowledge in pre-listening activities to ensure successful comprehension. While pre-listening activities are common practice, teachers should ensure that students integrate this into their own pre-listening habits.

Post-Listening Tasks

Post-listening tasks should be modified to make them more manageable for lower level students. Although upper-intermediate students appreciated the task of summarizing the lectures, claiming it helped improve their summarizing skills, many lower-level students stated it was very difficult and took substantial amounts of time, as just understanding the speakers was a challenge. For them, less demanding writing tasks, such as listing what they grasped and discussing their reactions with others, might suffice and be more motivating.

Focus on General Meaning

Students should be repeatedly reminded that they are not expected to understand the lectures perfectly and that the focus is on general meaning, not details. This could prevent unnecessary frustration.

Transcripts and Subtitles

The final point concerns the transcripts and subtitles accompanying the lectures. They can improve students' listening skills or deter them from developing. Some students believed they understood the listening materials when they were merely reading the subtitles. As Waring (2008) pointed out, students may only "be understanding what the subtitle says, not the original spoken English" (p. 8). Some students who confessed that they heavily relied on the transcripts or subtitles to write summaries confirmed this statement. One student said, "I think LLJ is a good assignment for English-learning beginner. However I sometimes rely on Japanese

transcript. It doesn't help my improving." Such students were often tempted to copy phrases from transcripts rather than try to summarize the lecture, thus plagiarizing.

To address this concern, assigning the following procedure might be useful.

1. Watch the lecture without transcripts or subtitles to understand the general meaning.
2. Watch it again and take notes; note difficult points.
3. Read the transcript, not the subtitles, to understand the whole lecture and underline new words missed in previous viewings.
4. Look up the meanings and pronunciation of these words and practice pronouncing them to make them more recognizable.
5. Listen to the lecture again without the transcript. With the meaning and the pronunciation of the new words behind you, you may be able to follow the lecture more easily.

Students should be encouraged to refrain from reading the subtitles until the end to confirm their comprehension.

Conclusion

This article illustrates some benefits that can be gained from using online lectures such as TED Talks for students at lower and upper levels of proficiency. In addition to most students acknowledging that the activity enhanced their listening comprehension, it is noteworthy that the TED lectures motivated some students to independently pursue their own interests and spurred some to further research. The authentic listening materials also helped them become used to real aural input. The paper also describes some of the scaffolding needed to optimize potential student benefits. Future studies could compile quantitative data to accurately gauge how the activity affects listening comprehension. Finally, one must bear in mind Field's (2002) comment concerning listening: "We focus on the product of listening when we should be interested in the process—what is going on in the heads of our learners" (p. 246). More research is necessary on identifying difficulties students encounter, particularly at lower proficiency levels and effective strategies to help students overcome them and become better listeners.

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Appendix A
Post-Course Survey Questions

I. On S&L course in general
1. S&L helped me improve my academic speaking and listening skills.
2. I enjoyed my S&L class.
3. How was the level of difficulty of this class for you?
4. How was the amount of homework for you?
5. Please feel free to write comments about your general impressions of the class.

II. On Speaking Skills / Tasks
6. S&L helped me improve my discussion skills (leading / participating).
7. S&L helped me improve my ability to make a short presentation of an opinion.
8. The "Speaking Phrase Tests" and online audio were useful for my study of phrases.
9. The "Final P&D" and Video Self-Analysis were effective for setting goals for improvement.
10. Please write any comments or suggestions about speaking skills and activities / homework.

III. On Listening Skills / Tasks
11. Compared with the beginning of the term, my lecture listening skills improved through S&L.
12. The Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ) was a good way to improve my lecture listening skills.
13. I want to continue to watch online lectures like TED in the future for English practice, even if it is not required.
14. Please write any comments or suggestions about listening and activities / homework.

Appendix B
Post-Course Survey
III. Listening Skills Results

Table B1

Upper-Intermediate Students

Questions	Responses	*n*	Percent
1. Compared with the beginning of the term, my lecture listening skills improved through the S&L course.	Strongly agree	60	30
	Agree	104	48
	Disagree	42	19
	Strongly disagree	7	3
2. The Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ) was a good way to improve my lecture listening skills.	Strongly agree	69	32
	Agree	107	50
	Disagree	25	12
	Strongly disagree	12	6
3. I want to continue to watch online lectures like TED in the future for English practice even if it is not required.	Strongly agree	107	50
	Agree	76	35
	Disagree	21	10
	Strongly disagree	11	5

Note. N = 213 for Questions 1 and 2; N = 215 for Question 3.

Table B2

Intermediate Students

Questions	Responses	*n*	Percent
1. Compared with the beginning of the term, my lecture listening skills improved through the S&L course.	Strongly agree	22	25
	Agree	43	49
	Disagree	15	17
	Strongly disagree	8	9
2. The Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ) was a good way to improve my lecture listening skills.	Strongly agree	28	32
	Agree	38	44
	Disagree	10	11
	Strongly disagree	11	13
3. I want to continue to watch online lectures like TED in the future for English practice even if it is not required.	Strongly agree	46	53
	Agree	21	24
	Disagree	11	13
	Strongly disagree	9	10

Note. N = 88 for Question 1; N = 87 for Questions 2 and 3.

Appendix C
Lecture Listening Journal Form

ELA Speaking & Listening: Lecture Listening Journal #_____

ID: _____ Your Name: _____

Date(s): _____ Source: _____

Name of Lecturer: _____

Title of Lecture: _____ Length: _____ minutes

Summary (100 words or more): Summarize the main points in YOUR OWN words. Begin by mentioning the title, lecturer, source, and date.

Reaction (50 words or more): Write your opinion about a main point in the lecture.

Reflection: How was this LLJ? How many minutes did you take to listen? How about writing the summary? Write some short comments for your instructor and add any questions or suggestions you have.

Note 1: You can type your LLJ and print if you like, or write by hand neatly on this paper. In some cases, your instructor might ask you to upload it on a class blog.

Note 2: You will need to attach your lecture notes to your LLJ. Any kinds of notes are fine, but try to take notes well. The notes will not be evaluated for quality. They are for the instructor's reference to see how you took notes on that lecture.

Appendix D
Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ) Self-Evaluation Form

Full Name _____ Section _____

Your Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ) is a chance to practice listening to academic lectures. Any English academic lecture 10 minutes or longer can be used. TED.com and academicearth.org have many interesting lectures, or you can use LLA. In total, you must create and submit a journal entry and lecture notes for at least 6 lectures. Your instructor may give you more specific directions about deadlines, good topics or how to submit your journal.

Each LLJ entry is worth 2 pts, and should include:

1. Summary (1 pt): 100 words or more on the main points in YOUR OWN words. Begin by mentioning the title, lecturer, source, and date: Example = In his / her lecture titled "Title Words" on [Date / Year], [Dr. / Professor Name] mainly describes how… / argues that…
2. Reaction (0.5 pts): 50 words or more of your opinion about a main point in the lecture
3. Lecture notes (0.5 pts). Rough is fine, but try to take good notes as you listen, and make sure you use loose leaf so that you can submit them to your instructor.
4. (Optionally) A few words of comments for your own record such as whether it was difficult, how many times you listened, whether you used subtitles, etc. Short is OK.

LLJ	Title / Speaker / Source	Deadline (Late = - 0.5)	Met Criteria? Check
No. 1	e.g., K. Robinson says schools kill creativity / Ken Robinson / TED		Summary 100+ □ Reaction 50+ □ L. Notes □ / 2pts
No. 2			Summary 100+ □ Reaction 50+ □ L. Notes □ / 2pts
No. 3			Summary 100+ □ Reaction 50+ □ L. Notes □ / 2pts
No. 4			Summary 100+ □ Reaction 50+ □ L. Notes □ / 2pts
No. 5			Summary 100+ □ Reaction 50+ □ L. Notes □ / 2pts
No. 6			Summary 100+ □ Reaction 50+ □ L. Notes □ / 2pts

Final Self-Scoring _____ / 12pts
Comment:

This evaluation form was created by Mark Christianson, formerly with ICU.

The Child Soldiers Project: Employing a Project-Based Learning and Teaching Curriculum

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Abstract

In recent years, project-based learning and teaching (PBLT) has received a great deal of attention from educators around the world and is now establishing its place in the language learning classroom, as a means of providing a more realistic setting for learning. However, PBLT can be difficult to implement in the Asian context due to the focus on more traditional teaching methods which emphasize exams. This paper introduces the Child Soldiers Project created for a Japanese high school classroom by focusing on the steps involved in the curriculum design. Using various concepts drawn from curriculum design, content-based learning, and learner autonomy, the rationale for each step is discussed. Finally, the Child Soldiers Project is placed within a PBLT framework, and a case made for its efficacy.

Although not a new approach to language learning, project-based learning and teaching (PBLT) has only received recognition as an effective educational pedagogy in the last twenty years (Beckett, 2006). A unified, concise definition is difficult, and it is generally described in terms of characteristics (Beckett, 2006; Stoller, 2006). For the purposes of this paper, the following eight characteristics were considered, based on Stoller (2006): PBLT should 1) maintain a focus on the project content, 2) consist of a series of manageable tasks, progressing in complexity and structured to provide opportunities to recycle knowledge and skills, 3) allow students to make some of their own choices throughout the project, 4) stimulate students' interest, 5) afford each student the opportunity to contribute equally and to use their individual skills during group work, 6) ensure all students take responsibility and are held accountable for their work, 7) include activities which focus on form, as well as skills practice throughout the project, 8) provide students with continuous feedback and opportunities for reflection.

This paper adds to the body of work on PBLT by introducing the Child Soldiers Project, implemented in a Japanese high school class. It demonstrates the successful implementation of a project in a language classroom, based on PBLT principles. The steps outlined maximize the development of students' skills. Specific language learning targets are not set; instead, overall fluency and general academic skills are developed.

Following a brief literature review and a description of the classroom context, the framework for the project design is introduced and each step is presented in detail. Finally, the paper discusses how the project satisfied the conditions for successful PBLT.

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Literature Review

As the ESL and EFL fields moved away from traditional teaching methodologies such as the grammar translation method and towards student-centered approaches, PBLT was put forth as a way of creating a classroom environment in which students could be more involved in the process of learning (Hedge, 1993). Although research into PBLT began with anecdotal evidence from a variety of teaching contexts, attempts at theorizing PBLT have also been made (Stoller, 2006).

This paper argues that PBLT is particularly relevant to language learning and teaching in Asia, due to the current trend of moving away from traditional teacher-centered instruction and towards communicative, learner-centered language education (Muller, Herder, Adamson, & Brown, 2012). PBLT provides one possible framework for this shift and is already attracting attention from researchers and practitioners across Asia: in Japan (Kobayashi, 2006), China (Guo, 2006), Thailand (Boondee, Kidrakarn, & Sa-Ngiamvibool, 2011), Korea (Lee & Lim, 2012), and Turkey (Kemaloglu, 2010), among others.

Through the description of the successful implementation of a project in a Japanese high school, this paper attempts to show how the PBLT approach can involve students in the learning process, both inside and outside the classroom.

Classroom Context

The project was created for the 11th grade in a Japanese high school and implemented over five months, spanning the second and third trimesters of the academic year. It was the primary focus of a 45-minute English class held three times a week.

Two-thirds of the school's students have spent one year or more studying abroad, while the remaining students have studied in Japan only. Students are streamed by English language ability, based on in-house tests, interviews with the English faculty and the duration of overseas study.

Three 11th grade groups totaling 69 students aged 16 or 17 participated in the project. The students' L1 is Japanese and the L2 throughout this project was English. The three groups comprised students at the intermediate level (approximate TOEIC scores between 500 and 750). They had lived in English-speaking countries for less than three years or in non-English speaking countries or had reached intermediate English level while studying exclusively in Japan. Their language level allowed them to work with authentic English materials and to use the target language for most of the tasks outlined in this paper.

Most of the project was done in groups of three, randomly changed for each task to allow students to get to know each other better and feel comfortable working with everyone in the class.

Steps in Creating the PBLT Curriculum

The structure of a project can be roughly separated into two parts, content input and content output. The two stages represent the comprehensible input and meaningful output considered essential for effective language learning (Stoller, 2006). Within a project, both stages must be carefully planned and followed by a reflection stage to maximize the outcomes for the students. The following subsections introduce the seven steps of the framework used for creating and implementing the Child Soldiers Project (Table 1). The rationale for each step is discussed,

based on theoretical concepts drawn from curriculum design, content-based teaching, and learner autonomy.

Table 1

Project Curriculum Design

Stage	Steps
Content input stage	1. Selecting a theme
	2. Selecting content materials
	3. Designing and sequencing tasks for content input
Content output stage	4. Establishing the final outcome for the project
	5. Structuring the process for creating the final product
	6. Exhibiting the final product
Reflection stage	7. Reflecting on the entire project

Selecting a Theme

Needs analysis is an integral part of sound curriculum design (Richards, 2001). When selecting a theme for the Child Soldiers Project, the content needs of the students were carefully considered. In this particular high school, all 11th grade students learn about the effects of World War II on Japan. The theme of child soldiers (children forced to join armed conflicts as soldiers) was considered appropriate because it presents a different aspect of war that Japanese students are usually not exposed to; additionally, the students were relatively close in age to the child soldiers they would learn about. Moreover, this was a chance to expose students to a global education topic (Cates & Jacobs, 2006) giving students the opportunity to learn about the lives of other children around the world.

Selecting Content Materials

One of the most important characteristics of PBLT is that it is content driven (Stoller, 2006), making the selection of appropriate content extremely important. All the materials chosen were authentic, providing advantages such as improving learner motivation by providing real socio-cultural information and real language (Richards, 2001). The materials were not graded in any way.

Three types of authentic materials were chosen: a novel, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (Beah, 2007), a movie, *Blood Diamond,* (Amato & Zwick, 2006), and a presentation by a United Nations volunteer who had worked in Sierra Leone in 2005. The contents of the novel were not graded for the students. The movie was played with English subtitles to facilitate comprehension to a certain extent. The presentation and subsequent question and answer session were also carried out in English.

The novel. The main means of content input for the project is a partly fictionalized account of Beah's experiences as a child soldier in Sierra Leone. Beah initially tried to escape the conflict between the government and the RUF (Revolutionary United Front), but was eventually caught by government forces and forced to become a child soldier. He was later rescued by UNICEF and placed into a rehabilitation center before immigrating to the United States, where he was adopted by an American family.

The movie. *Blood Diamond*, released by Warner Bros. in 2006, was chosen to supplement the book for content input. The movie is set during the civil war in Sierra Leone and includes many

scenes based on eyewitness accounts. The movie was incorporated into the project to provide a more realistic picture of events in Sierra Leone.

The presentation. A United Nations volunteer gave a presentation on her experiences of working in Sierra Leone approximately four years after the end of the civil war. She worked closely with local volunteers and thus was able to give a detailed firsthand account of the country and its people. The presentation helped to make the civil war and its effects on the population of Sierra Leone real for the students, providing a bridge between the fictionalized accounts in the book and movie and the factual research that students later completed during the content output stage.

Designing and Sequencing the Tasks for Content Input

Various tasks were developed and carefully sequenced to foster students' understanding of the content material, as well as the development of critical thinking skills. Willis & Willis (2007) argued for the importance of planning the task sequence to allow students adequate time to prepare the tasks to be carried out in class. Ellis (2003) also pointed out that sequencing tasks is essential "to facilitate maximum learning" (p. 220). This allowed students to build subsequent skills and knowledge on previously gained ones.

Table 2 summarizes the tasks designed for the three types of content materials chosen. Detailed explanations of the gallery walk, discussion circles, and focus on form tasks are included in Appendix A.

Table 2

Content Input Tasks and Their Purposes

Material	Tasks	Task purpose	Language
Novel	Gallery walk	Initial content review	L2
	Discussion circles	Deeper content analysis	L2
	Imagining the ending	Prediction of content	L2
	Summarizing Putting story events in order	Content review	L2
	Vocabulary Mini grammar lessons	Focus on form	L2 + L1
Movie	Answering comprehension questions	Initial content review	L2
	Vocabulary Mini grammar lessons	Focus on form	L2 + L1
Presentation	Research	Prediction of content	L2 + L1
	Creating questions for speaker	Prediction of content	L2
	Question and answer session with speaker	Deeper content analysis	L2

The tasks related to the novel were sequenced in a natural progression. Students completed initial content review tasks immediately after reading each section of the book before moving onto deeper analysis tasks, such as discussion circles, to develop critical thinking skills. Before reading the last chapters of the book, prediction tasks allowed students to build logically on existing knowledge to make educated guesses about the end of the story. Finally, review tasks after each section ensured consolidation of content learning. The main language medium for these tasks was L2, with only very occasional use of L1 as students clarified task instructions for

each other.

The movie was used as support material; thus, the tasks were not as extensive as those for the book. Students engaged in initial content reviews and discussed comprehension questions with the help of a worksheet. L2 was used primarily for these tasks.

For the book and the movie, focus on form tasks were implemented to ensure vocabulary acquisition and practice of grammatical structures necessary for the successful completion of the content tasks. For these tasks, both L1 and L2 were used. The teacher presented and explained the target forms in L2 to the entire class and provided further explanations in L1 as necessary. Groups were also given the chance to confirm their understanding in their L1.

Students prepared for the presentation by learning about the current situation in Sierra Leone as opposed to the image depicted in the novel and movie. This allowed them to predict the content of the presentation and to prepare questions. The 20-minute presentation was followed by a question and answer session (both in English), which allowed students to reflect further on the presentation content.

Establishing the Final Outcome for the Project

The final product for the project was set by the teacher and designed to foster speaking and presentation skills. Groups prepared poster presentations on a topic of their choice related to child soldiers. Giving students the choice of topic aligns with PBLT principles as it empowers students to take responsibility for their own learning (Stoller, 2006). It also has numerous other benefits: increased autonomy and motivation, increased student learning, and improved classroom behavior, as any apathy previously demonstrated essentially disappears (Passe, 1996).

Structuring the Process for Creating the Final Product

The process for creating the final product was loosely based on the writing process (Nation, 2009). The steps used were:

1. Brainstorming and choosing a topic
2. Research
3. Outline
4. Feedback on outline
5. Poster draft
6. Feedback on poster draft
7. Final poster
8. Practice presentation

First, groups of students brainstormed topics related to the general theme of child soldiers and chose the topic of most interest. Students then researched their chosen topic and produced a poster outline. The teacher provided extensive feedback on these outlines to facilitate a better connection of ideas. Next, students worked on the poster drafts, with mock-up posters also receiving teacher feedback prior to the creation of the final posters. The last step was practicing the presentations, during which they also received teacher feedback on delivery. Additionally, peer feedback was incorporated throughout the entire process, with all students responsible for reviewing the work of each member in the group.

In this stage, L1 played a much more extensive role than in the content input stage. To allow for cognitive and academic transfer from L1 (Cummins, 2007), the use of L1 was not

discouraged; thus, students used Japanese for brainstorming, outlining, feedback, and some of their research. All written work, presentation practice, and final presentations used English exclusively.

Exhibiting the Final Product

A carousel format was used for the poster presentations, with each group presenting three times to small audience groups. This type of simultaneous interaction (Kagan, 1994) allows students more interaction time with their peers as compared to the more traditional format in which one group presents in front of the entire class. Furthermore, giving the presentation three times affords students the chance to improve their performance and language use through task repetition (Lynch & Maclean, 2001).

Reflecting on the Entire Project

The final stage, the reflection stage, is essential for the consolidation of the acquired language (Stoller, 2006). Here, students performed two reflective tasks. First, they discussed their performance throughout the entire project in groups, focusing on the process of creating the final presentations. Students presented their conclusions to the entire class in a teacher-led class discussion. In the group discussions, both L1 and L2 were used, but the teacher used the L2 for the follow-up class discussion. Finally, students completed a worksheet focused on reflections on the entire project; this was done in English. Appendix B includes a detailed analysis of the students' feedback on the Child Soldiers Project.

Situating the Child Soldiers Project Within PBLT Parameters

The conditions for successful PBLT below have been adapted from Stoller (2006). Following each condition, the author addresses how that particular condition was met during the design or execution of the Child Soldiers Project.

Focus on the Project Content

Content was the main drive behind this project: in the content input stage through authentic materials and in the content output stage when students generated content based on research from authentic materials.

Progressively Complex Tasks and Knowledge and Skills Recycling

Throughout the project, tasks were sequenced to ensure students progressed smoothly from one task to the next. In the content input stage, for example, students recalled the content they had read before discussing it in depth, used the insights gained to predict subsequent events, and then reviewed the content to ensure retention.

Student Choices

The content output stage gave students the freedom to choose any topic related to the issue of child soldiers. Groups chose topics such as the daily lives of child soldiers, girls as child soldiers, international organizations helping child soldiers, and the problem of drugs being used to control child soldiers.

Stimulation of Interest

Through reading about Beah's experiences, students became emotionally invested, in part because of the proximity in age between them and the child soldiers in the novel and movie. Furthermore, they understood the importance of educating others on this issue, which increased their motivation in preparing engaging presentations. The project's effect was not temporary, as

anecdotal evidence showed that many students chose to enroll in further social studies classes dealing with the issue of minorities around the world.

Opportunities to Contribute

The varied nature of the tasks allowed each student to contribute in ways they were most comfortable with, in turn increasing their motivation to improve skills they lacked in. In one group, for example, a student whose reading and writing skills were slightly lower managed to contribute not only his higher levels of fluency and confidence in public speaking, but also his personal experiences of living in South Africa for several years.

Student Accountability

From the beginning of the project, the teacher made clear that all students were expected to contribute equally to group work. However, it was peer pressure ensured that each member completed assignments. Throughout the entire content output stage of the project, the teacher only assigned the major goals, such as the completion of the poster draft. It was left to the groups to divide the work and to monitor progress.

Focus on Form Activities and Skills Practice

Focus on form tasks targeting both vocabulary and grammatical aspects were incorporated throughout the project. The teacher also gave feedback on the language use in posters and presentation speeches.

Continuous Feedback and Opportunities for Reflection

The students' performance was evaluated after each task, and the teacher gave frequent individual, group and class feedback on language use and skills development. The feedback was both summative in the form of grades, and formative to foster student development.

Conclusion

Recognizing the challenges of incorporating PBLT in foreign language classrooms in Asia, this paper adds to the growing literature on PBLT in the region by reporting on its successful implementation in a Japanese high school classroom. Through a series of tasks, students learned content while developing academic and English language skills. They were also given choices of content and process, allowing them to take responsibility for their learning and to become independent learners.

Future research should examine the relationship between project work and learner autonomy in more detail to establish the efficacy of PBLT in fostering learner autonomy in Asia. To that end, student performance and reflections need further examination as a means of evaluating the PBLT curriculum. Furthermore, proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and fluency should be measured before, during, and after the end of a project to establish the effect of PBLT on language acquisition.

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Appendix A
Examples of Tasks for Content Input

Gallery Walk

For this task, the students were put in as many groups as the number of chapters in the book section assigned for reading. For the first section of the novel for example, Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5 were assigned for reading, so the students were put in four groups. The blackboard was section into four parts, with the title of the each chapter at the top. Groups were each assigned a section, given chalk in different colors, and instructed to write down as many things they could remember about the chapter within a time limit of two minutes. After the first two minutes, groups rotated to the next section, and the task was repeated until groups returned to their initial section of the blackboard. They were then given an additional two minutes to organize the information in their section, and then they presented this information to the class.

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 4	Chapter 5

Discussion Circles

For this task, students were put in groups of three and assigned specific roles: discussion leader, summarizer, and connector. The roles were explained in detail and group members chose their own roles, for which they prepared a worksheet for homework. The actual discussion took place in the following lesson, followed by a short presentation on the conclusions of the discussion given to the entire class. Following the discussion task, groups analyzed their performance, by considering what went well during the task, what did not go very well and the reasons for it, as well as what could be improved in the next discussion circle.

Below is a detailed explanation of each role.

Discussion leader	Summarizer	Connector
- prepares comprehension and opinion questions on the assigned reading section - makes sure everyone has an equal chance to speak during the discussion, and presents the conclusions	- prepares a summary of the assigned reading section - presents the summary to the group during the discussion	- prepares a list of connections between the aspects in the assigned reading section and the students' life in Japan - presents the connection to the group during discussion

Focus on Form Tasks:

Error Correction

This task was implemented at various points throughout the project content output stage. First, the teacher collected the students' work (presentation outlines, poster drafts) and compiled a list of grammar points that students had problems with. Then, a worksheet with error correction exercises was prepared based on the problematic grammar points list. After students completed the exercises, they were given their drafts back, and they corrected their own mistakes. The task was done in groups and the teacher assisted the students as necessary.

Mini Grammar Lessons

This task was in general carried out in tandem with the error correction task. Based on the same list of problematic points, the teacher chose one grammar point and prepared a short (10 to 15 minutes) grammar lesson based on it. Following form and usage explanations, students completed worksheets with drill exercises meant to consolidate learning of the grammar point.

Vocabulary Race

This task was completed before reading a certain section of the book. The teacher compiled a list of keywords from the section, and prepared slips that contained only the meaning in context of the keywords. The slips were taped to the blackboard during the class, and the students were given the list of keywords. Students worked in pairs, with one student running to the board and trying to memorize one slip of paper, and then running back to dictate to the other student. After finishing half of the slips, the students swapped roles. When they finished writing down all the meanings, the pairs matched the list of keywords to their meanings. This was a contest, with the winners being the first pair to correctly match the meanings to the keywords.

Vocabulary Notebooks

Students were instructed to keep vocabulary notebooks as they read the novel, which included the target word, its part of speech, its meaning in context, and the Japanese translation. The vocabulary notebooks were used for various tasks, as students were asked to use words they had collected in the notebooks for preparing the discussion role sheets, for writing summaries of various sections of the novel, and for writing their predictions for the ending of the novel.

Appendix B
Student Impressions of the Child Soldiers Project

Data on what the students felt they had gained throughout the Child Soldiers Project, as well as what difficulties they had experienced, was collected using the project end reflections sheet. Students answered the following:

1. List two things that you or your group did well during the project. Give reasons.
2. List two things that were difficult for you or your group during the project. Give reasons.
3. Write any other comments you have about the project.

Analysis of the student responses identified four areas students felt they made progress in: presentation skills, fluency, content learning, and group work skills. Below is a list of quotes from students. The quotes have not been modified from the students' original.

Improved Presentation Skills

Student A: "The presentation made me learn how to plan, show and talk about it. The experience can use when I grow up and had the same situation that I had to do a presentation about something."

Student B: "We could tell the audience by using pictures, numbers, gesture and slow speaking to heighten their understanding and interest."

Improved Fluency

Student C: "By poster session, I practiced to speak English. I speak more Japanese than English everyday because I never go to foreign countries. […] For poster session, I read a lot of information in English, so my vocabulary grows up."

Student D: "We could do the presentation smoothly. Everyone presented their part with not so much miss. We could explain something that is not on the poster and answer the questions smoothly."

Content Learning

Student E: "I learned from the research many things that I don't know at that time."

Student F: "I learned so many things about war, child soldiers, UNICEF and our life that we cannot control by other people. Through this presentation my mind changed a lot."

Group Work Skills

Student G: "It was difficult to choose the topic of the presentation. Put everyone's opinion together is a really hard work, but it makes our presentation almost perfect, because more idea can come out."

Student H: "When we were making the posters, we discussed a lot so that's why we could make such a great poster. We all did our homework on time and we tried very hard."

On the other hand, students also reported problems with collaboration, as well as with making themselves understood to their audience.

Collaboration Issues

Student I: "It was very hard to do work with other people, because everyone had different ideas and to make them one big idea we spend a lot of time."

Audience Comprehension Issues

Student J: "Getting audience's attention was very difficult because even though I made a pretty good hook, they couldn't understand what I was saying."

Student K: "Just saying or reading won't make people understand. By putting feelings, what I want to say would go into their heart."

Utilization of Semantic Networks in the Teaching of Vocabulary

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Abstract

Cognitive neuroscience and psychology have shone light on new ways to help students learn, understand, and apply new vocabulary. The purpose of this paper is to present a theoretical method for the integration of semantic network utilization into the classroom. This paper will also introduce insights from Cognitive Linguistics as to how the brain best learns vocabulary. The method in this paper springs from the fields of psychology and neuroscience as well as inspiration from educators who are building new teaching styles. Semantic networks in the brain are the maps to understanding that hold the potential to make learning vocabulary more effective and meaningful. The purpose of the method detailed in this paper is to inspire other educators to incorporate cognitive linguistic insights into their classes as well as further the discourse on integrating this field into the teaching of English as a second or foreign language.

The method proposed in this paper is a theoretical model based on ideas such as Differentiated Instruction, emotionality in learning, cognitive linguistics, student schema, and semantic networks. While this method is not the result of direct collaboration with the educators mentioned within this paper, the author has implemented this method in his own classes at Teikyo University with success. Tomlinson's differentiated instruction (1999) weighs heavily in this method, as it influences the core concept of playing to the student's personal needs and interests during the course of an activity or lesson. This strategy combines well with Murphy's (2012) NeuroEFL strategies that emphasize the connections between emotionally engaged students and higher learning potentials. Murphy (2012) stated that students who are engaged in and emotionally connected to the material being presented have a higher potential for learning and retaining new information. There also exists the real possibility that the way students see the world is different from their peers. The way one understands the meaning and contextual use of a vocabulary term, as a collection of understanding and use, is known as *schema* (Littlemore, 2012). These differences give teachers the unique opportunity to combine student experiences and thoughts while they are emotionally engaged in vocabulary activities. Recurring activation of existing and new connections to the core concept helps to cement a new term into the mind (Jenkins, 2012a; Lin, 1997; Roediger & McDermott, 1995). The theoretical method presented in this paper has been put into use by the author of this paper in university level classes with very good results, as measured by student satisfaction questionnaires and also against extensive reading vocabulary practice assessment scores. The author of this paper is currently collecting data in an action research to verify that this method provides benefits over other more traditionally accepted methods of vocabulary learning.

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History of Semantic Networks and Basic Assumptions

The origin of the term *network*, as used to describe language memory and the brain, dates back to the 1970s (Leech, 1974; Lehrer, 1974) when the lexical structure of terms was being explored. The psycholinguist Aitchison (1987) researched how the brain organized its mental lexicon and coined two terms to describe how the brain stored vocabulary. The first, which will not be discussed at length in this paper, is the globule theory. When it is presented visually, the globule theory shows that word meanings are overlapping in meaning and contextual nature. This means that the location where one word's meaning ends cannot be precisely measured in relation to its neighboring, lexically-connected word. The theory also states that vocabulary terms can be traced back to semantic primitives which should hold similar meanings in all languages. The second is the cob-web theory, which evolved into what is known today as semantic networks (Aitchison, 1987). The cob-web theory shows the organizational nature of lexical terms stored in the brain by connecting related terms (e.g., hyponyms to hypernyms, or terms to their antonyms and indirect antonyms) to each other by drawing a network of interconnected lines and nodes (Jenkins, 2012a; Lin, 1997). This style of word mapping is one of the influencing ideas of the theoretical model proposed in this paper. One node, which is comprised of many interconnected terms, is connected to many others, which gives a fuller understanding of a term's meaning and contextual use. This deeper understanding of a vocabulary term helps language learners (LLs) to not only remember and recall vocabulary terms, but also to use them in correct contextual and anecdotal situations.

It can be argued that the more connections a new vocabulary term makes to a student's life when being learned, the stronger and more indelible the mark is on the LL's brain (Lin, 1997). By fleshing out a word's context, images, meanings, and schema relationships in class, educators help students master a new word more quickly and efficiently. Theoretical contributions from leaders in the cognitive linguistics field (Boers, Demecheleer, & Eyckmans, 2004; Lazar, 1996; Littlemore, 2001) have indicated that applying this cognitive framework of interconnected meanings in thematic clusters aids learners of English as they progress towards mastery (Mirjalili, Jabbari, & Rezai, 2012). New terms should also be readily connectable to experiences and situations in the students' lives that are relevant to them. These connectors, which are presented in an individualized manner by the teacher for each class as well as created by each student's individual experiences later in the method, create unique opportunities to put into practice cognitive linguistic insights in communicative activities in the classroom.

Semantic Network Stimulation During Learning

In the brain, memory comes from the connections among neurons that stay behind once a stimulus is experienced and processed in the lexicon. These connections are re-excited each time we need to recall a word or see a sight connected to the term. One can use the interconnected nature of semantic networks to the benefit of students. For example, when introducing the new lexical item *obfuscate*, a word which has been introduced in the author's classroom using this theoretical method, it is presented with connectors that the teacher deems both culturally and semantically appropriate exemplars (Figure 1). Teachers must also take into consideration the differentiated nature of exemplars by country or region. An example of this is using the connector *ninja* in an example sentence and the word *map*. Stimulation of connectors around a lexical item gives the new terms stronger connections, making them, in effect, more memorable. It has been shown that, with enough stimulation of a semantic network, the brain can be tricked into hearing a word that has not been presented to it (Roediger & McDermott, 1995). Jenkins (2012b) demonstrated this at the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) conference in 2012 by listing a string of terms which are connectors to an unsaid term. He showed that related terms were activated by spoken connectors and

created a false memory (Roediger & McDermott, 1995) in the brains of the listeners. These connections create the understanding of the term's meaning and context, which is housed in the student's schema (Littlemore, 2012). Once connected to lexical items or experiences in the student's mind, these semantically connected words, or connectors, are exploitable in that they reinforce the new term in the brain each time they are used or heard in the context of a lesson which introduces the aforementioned new term. By extension, by carefully choosing connectors to illustrate a new term, an educator can stimulate the target word or words in the network from the onset of the method. This selection of connectors ends up creating a stronger bond for the word; thus, it is more easily recalled for later use. This complements what many neuroscientists (Sousa, 2011) say about the plasticity of the brain.

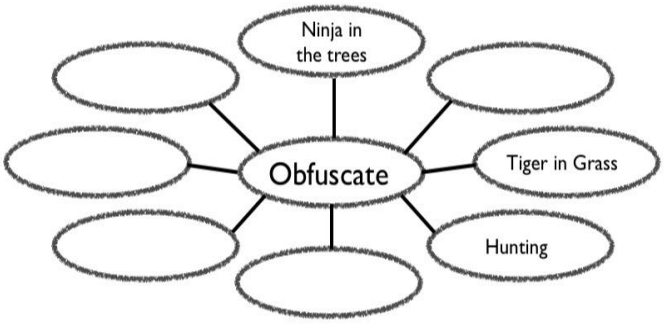

Figure 1. Example of a planned semantic network activity used in the author's class.

The more one uses the brain for an action or skill, the more lasting the memory that is created, due to reinforcement. The opposite is also true; if the knowledge of a word gained is not utilized, either in a direct or indirect manner, it can start to degrade over time and eventually be virtually inaccessible from one's working lexicon. This supports the popular saying "use it or lose it" as it applies to memories and language skills. Jenkins (2012a) showed that in a lexicon, there exist semantic nodes which can act as a focal point of understanding but at the same time are fuzzy in that it is difficult to determine where one concept ends and another one begins. This example lends credibility to the globule theory put forth by Aitchison (1987) that lexical entries are connected and overlapping, thus creating the fuzzy nature of the nodes. While educators, through experience and reflective practice, can improve their sense of what works in class, neuroscience and cognitive psychology are making inroads into new best practices that are still being developed. Presenting terms with associated, thematically-connected items helps to cement new words in the brain's lexical network and give appropriate contexts for use and understanding (Lin, 1997; Mirjalili, Jabbari, & Rezai, 2012). Educators must also take into consideration the various differences between students' perceptions of terms, or construals (Littlemore, 2012), and use those differences to help in the learning process.

Students' Individual Semantic Networks

Educators know that not all students are the same and, as such, cannot be expected to learn exactly the same way in all situations. Murphy (2012) has stated that human beings' memories are the sum of their connections. In essence, one's reality is shaped by these connections in the brain. One's experiences make up how those connections are formed and explain why one understands terms or ideas differently from others. Littlemore (2001) stated that these differences of understanding are from an individual's schema. Differences in learning styles will also color one's reality and how new terms are coded and understood in the brain. Differentiated instruction implies that it is important to take differences of understanding and experience, as well as socio-economic status, culture, and other factors into consideration when attempting to teach new concepts to students (Tomlinson, 1999). By utilizing students'

experiences in life and differences in their schema, as well as connecting well-known or culturally significant images that reinforce vocabulary meaning in students' lives, educators can make lessons more emotionally charged and meaningful for their students. Taking students into consideration when planning activities also provides opportunities for practice that might otherwise not have been presented before. By knowing, for example, that students are interested in a new video game, the teacher can exploit this knowledge by including information, terms, or even the name of the game into a connector example to create engagement in the lesson.

Languages, and the associated terms therein, require context to have meaning; thus, using a student's past experiences and original ideas in the learning process makes the learning experience emotionally charged. Providing students with opportunities to expand their semantic networks as they see fit allows them to further incorporate new words into their existing semantic nodes that surround the new term (Figure 2). Students should also have the chance to express why they have added a term as a connector, thus giving them opportunities to use and reinforce the new term and continually activate the new lexical item's semantic node. Utilizing student-created connectors gives new terms greater depth and breadth of meaning to students than they could get from using a dictionary (Anderson, 2011). This also allows for the content to be emotionally charged, as the students use original content and ideas to connect the new term to their lives while adding depth and breadth to its meaning. Learning that is emotionally charged is a powerful spur for retention in the brain and keeps students motivated and interested in the subject at hand (Murphy, 2012).

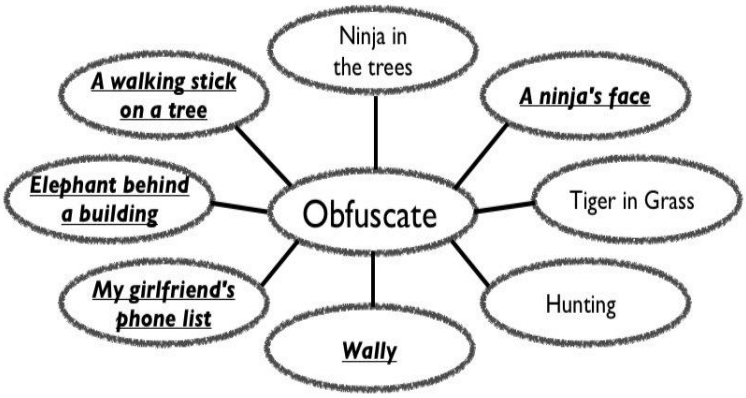

Figure 2. Example of semantic network with student ideas added. Underlined words denote actual student ideas as presented in the author's class.

The lexical construal differences among students can also be utilized in a communicative manner during the class to further enhance the understanding, context, and significance of new terms. This sharing of emotionally connected examples is also important in making more connections in semantic networks by exploring schematic differences among students. This provides excellent openings for students to express themselves in a communicative manner with a controlled group of new vocabulary terms while simultaneously reinforcing new terms by activating their semantic networks as they discuss their connectors.

Theoretical Method for Utilizing Semantic Networks

There are many methods that are available for educators to employ to teach vocabulary, but there are still achievement gaps in learning among students. No two students are the same and, as the understanding of specific cognitive and neurological mechanisms for learning improves, educators are constantly developing new methods to instruct students. The purpose of the

following sections is to present a theoretical method, with associated activities, that has been both interesting for students and effective for vocabulary learning in the author's classes at Teikyo University. The following method utilizes semantic networks either directly or indirectly to teach, reinforce, and encourage the use of new terms. Two teaching styles, top-down, in part one of the method, and bottom-up, in part three, are simultaneously utilized for students to gain a fuller understanding of a new term. The purpose of using both styles is to create an emotionally-charged learning environment; this is referred to as the sandwich teaching method by Murphy (2012). The sandwich method leads to more motivation, better understanding, and an emotional learning atmosphere because teachers are giving information to and receiving information from students.

Part 1: Contextual Clues

First in this theoretical method of vocabulary instruction is utilizing contextual clues in sample sentences. Using context clues supports the learning done with semantic network practice and provides a valuable skill that students can use beyond the classroom. When students are presented with a new word in the context of a sentence that has been specifically designed by the teacher to show its meaning and context, powerful implicit learning occurs. Terms are also introduced with visual, auditory, or other stimuli to aid contextual comprehension and determination of their meaning (Figure 3). Students are given the opportunity to read the list of sample terms and use the information provided in contextually correct sample sentences to find the meaning of a word. While a term can be presented in different contexts, a few sentences which have been carefully crafted by the teacher should suffice to start a student on the road to inquiry-based learning.

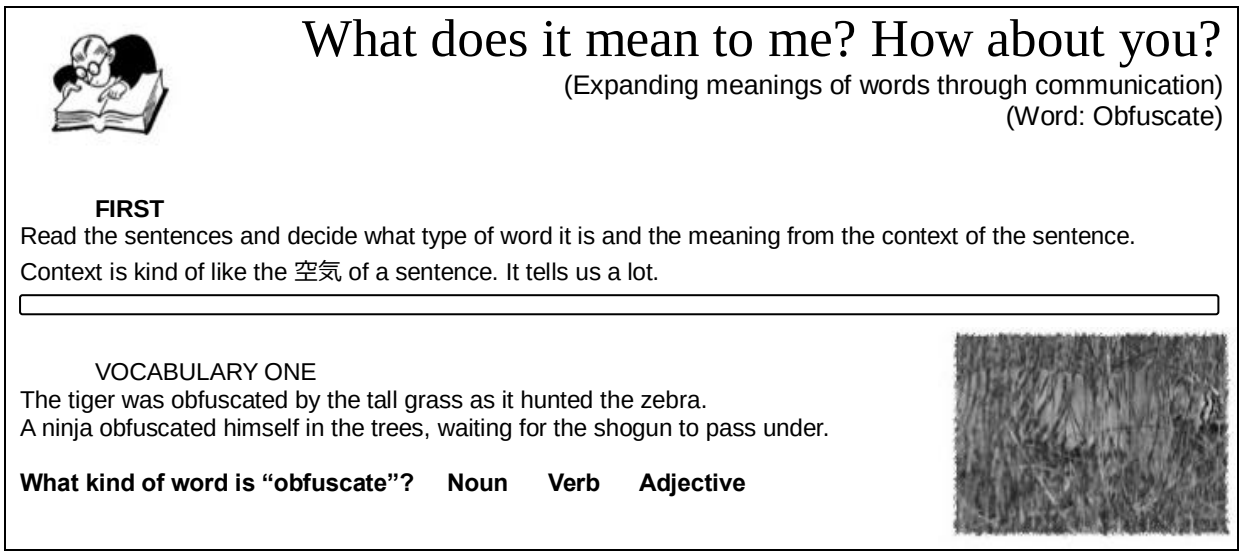

Figure 3. Example of contextual clues used in class to introduce the target word *obfuscate*.

Students would then be given a chance to explain the part of speech it is and the meaning as they see it. Providing opportunities to ask follow-up questions about peer interpretations encourages curiosity and allows gains in semantic knowledge through schema sharing (Figure 4). The teacher must also be aware of what is going on to ensure that any misunderstandings that occur, e.g., when a student creates an incorrect or incomplete meaning from the context of a sentence, are corrected.

What does it mean?
Share your ideas with your partner. Write his or her ideas below.

Figure 4. Example of meaning sharing for the target word *obfuscate*.

As previously mentioned, no student will have exactly the same definition, contextual knowledge, or vision of a new term. Utilizing a student's individual understanding of the world plays directly into differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 1999) and emotional learning (Murphy, 2012), both of which are shown to improve learning by creating a positive learning environment that employs the student's own ideas and opinions in the learning process.

Part 2: Schema Mapping

Once a new term has been introduced to the class, students are given a word map with the new term in the center presented along with iconic examples carefully chosen for cultural and age appropriateness to get the students started (Figure 5). Semantic maps allow students to map out word meanings on a segmented map which connects a target word to multiple, semantically connected terms (Suhor & Little, 1988). In this part of the method, teachers make use of these types of semantic maps in a thematic fashion, expanding out from only semantically connected words. Teachers do this by having students write words for people, creatures, emotions, and places for their connectors to the target word. Emotionally charged connectors such as these positively influence learning (Murphy, 2012). Students continue by filling in their own connectors to the vocabulary term in the schema map. During this time, the teacher monitors the students' progress and helps to clarify meanings, correct flaws in their understanding, or correct the use of inappropriate connectors. Students are encouraged to write different types of connectors that, in their schema, connect to the target word. This activity allows students to follow their own mental images and understanding of a term and connect it to their lives, making learning a more implicit experience. This part of the method is largely dependent on the students' life experiences and willingness to share with their peers.

NOW
Write in five connected words that you can think of for "obfuscate."
(example: ninja, hunting, tiger in grass)

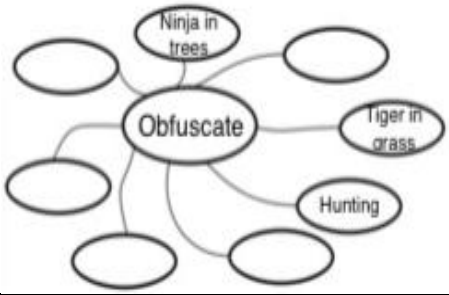

Figure 5. Example of schema mapping for the target word *obfuscate*.

Part 3: Sharing Schema and Increasing Depth and Breadth of the New Word

Once the semantic map of a term has been completed, putting the students into pairs or groups allows them to discuss their maps with each other and then explain why they have added their connectors to the map (Figure 6). The teacher needs to encourage the students' curiosity at first by supporting follow-up questions with praise and showing interest in their explanations as to why they have chosen a connector. The teacher can even encourage short debates among groups as to if a connector belongs in the semantic network. Once sufficient time has been given to discuss the meaning, as understood by their peers, and practice the new term, students use a prepared questionnaire to further practice using the term in a more directed communicative manner. The questionnaire also provides students with opportunities to write their own questions to reinforce the new term and make the learning process more emotionally

charged.

FINALLY

Talk to a person around you and compare the connected words that he / she put in the word tree. Add two of your partner's words below and ask why the words were added. Write the reason for the connection next to the word. Make sure to ask follow-up questions to find out more about the reasons behind the connections.

Word 1 _____ Why added: _____

Word 2 _____ Why added: _____

Figure 6. Example of a questionnaire for schema sharing for the target word *obfuscate*.

Conclusion and Further Considerations

Utilizing semantic links to reinforce as well as broaden the understanding of a new vocabulary term, while taking into consideration the differences among students' schema and cultural identities, is a method of instruction that has yet to be proven through quantitative research. The research currently available on lexical structures, differentiated instruction, utilization of multiple teaching styles, and semantic networks as ways to allow students to become more interested in a subject and learn in an effective manner is copious. Combining these different facets of pedagogy into a method creates an atmosphere of communication, learning, and interest. This theoretical method also creates an emotionally charged learning environment by using student ideas and differences in their schema, experiences, and opinions to further enhance the effectiveness of the teacher's lessons. By learning vocabulary with both depth and breadth of knowledge, students are able to utilize multiple paths to express themselves and convey their thoughts, opinions, and ideas to others. Gains in communicative ability, as well as standardized test scores, are believed to be products of having a contextually correct and deep lexicon. It must be noted that further research into the gains and their longevity is needed to push this method onto more solid ground as it is as yet unproven. Quantitative measures of the method's effectiveness must be obtained to prove or disprove its worth as a methodology. The author of this paper is currently engaged in an action research to help prove the effectiveness of this method as compared to other vocabulary teaching methods.

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Course Design in the Digital Age: Learning Through Interaction With News-Based Materials

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Abstract

The use of digital media as a mode of delivering course materials has become increasingly common in the field of language education. The aim of language educators has therefore been to discover suitable ways of using digital media to enable learners to engage with materials effectively and enhance their learning experience. This paper describes a collaborative syllabus between teachers at two Japanese universities which shares the same mode of delivery: a website of news-based materials. Students are asked to read an authentic and current news story each week and, after a classroom session, write their reactions to the story by adding their comments on the website. By using an online mode of delivery, students are motivated to build their confidence in expressing themselves in English away from the classroom and begin to engage fully with the course materials as their opinions become topics in the developing online discussions.

Recent years have seen a significant rise in the proliferation of digital media in our lives. This is also true of the classroom, where teachers are now able to use a vast array of material from the Internet as an alternative to more traditional teaching tools such as board work and handouts. However, as Chun (2008) pointed out, the use of such technology should not be considered a methodology in itself. In fact, Blake (2008) envisaged that language teaching will change not because of technology but as a result of teachers "rethinking what they do" when incorporating technology into their syllabi and lessons (p. 8). There has therefore been a great deal of experimentation and research by teachers into using digital media and materials as an aid to language learning (Arena & Jefferson, 2008; Carney, 2007; Johnson, 2004, Kung & Chuo, 2002). Significant to this is what Alm (2006) has identified as the recent shift from using the Internet as a repository of reference materials to using it for blogging and social networking, modes of communication that many language learners use in their daily lives. This has exciting implications for the process of language learning, now seen by most as a more personal, proactive, conscious, and cognitive endeavor (Brown, 2006). As a result, Erbaggio, Gopalakrishnan, Hobbs, and Liu (2010) consider digital technology to be an effective way of connecting with the current population of students by communicating with them in "their own language." This, in turn, can have an impact on their motivation and engagement. With this in

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mind, for teachers who are charged with creating their own courses, utilizing digital technology and materials in their classes has become a valuable component of the course design process.

The nature of the Japanese higher education context means that course and materials design is an ongoing concern of teachers. Most Japanese higher education institutions require all students to have one or two years of compulsory language study (Butler & Iino, 2005). While some of these institutions have well-established language programs in place that aim to provide a general course in English to students in all departments, many require individual teachers to design and implement appropriate courses for single departmental classes that they are asked to teach from year to year (Marchand, 2011). Often such institutions provide nothing more than a course title and a general idea of student level. Teachers are therefore responsible for making most of the major decisions about the content of the course, including materials selection and student assessment. Faced with this situation, the authors of this paper have collaborated to design and teach a language course concurrently to two classes at two universities in the Tokyo area. The authors decided to use a website updated weekly with current news stories as a central feature of the course. This would function as a medium for presenting lesson content and for students to interact with the weekly topic and each other by adding their comments and opinions. The authors planned to examine the results of student interaction with the course content and to discover students' opinions and reactions to using the online materials. This paper will therefore look at some of the decisions that went into the course design process and explain the choice and use of digital materials. It will then present and comment on a few examples of student use of the website. Finally it will conclude by discussing the results of a survey that asked students about their opinions of the course and their interaction with the materials online.

Course Design Process

The course has its origins in a syllabus designed for a university course in Current Affairs English by Marchand (2011). Through a process of decision-making, informed by the components of Graves's (2000) course design framework (defining context, assessing needs, developing materials, etc.), Marchand created a course using news articles as the main content of the lessons. The success of the course, as reflected in the positive feedback from students (Marchand, 2011), clarified that the main elements of the current affairs course would be very suitable for other university classes. The authors therefore began to meet regularly before the start of the academic year to discuss ways in which they could collaborate on the writing of materials and the administration of the course for their respective classes. What follows is an outline of the main features of the course with reference to the decisions made during the course design process regarding teaching context, course content and materials, and mode of delivery.

Teaching Context

Both authors teach compulsory English classes at two large private universities in the Tokyo area. Three classes of non-English majors were involved in the study for a total of 62 students; one class was from the commerce department of one university and two classes were from the law department of the other. Initial information provided by the universities indicated that the student level would be intermediate to advanced, based on their English test scores (ranging on the TOEIC test from approximately 400 to 900) or previous experience of study or living overseas. The authors therefore anticipated that the students would have enough English to cope with challenging materials. However, based on previous teaching experiences and beliefs (Graves, 2000), the authors were concerned that students who had not selected English as their major would be more difficult to motivate. In addition, there was the widely documented

problem of Japanese student reticence to speak out in class and engage fully with the learning process (Anderson, 1993; Doyon, 2000; Marchand, 2012; Williams, 1994). Consequently, it was imperative that the content of the lessons engage student interest and keep students motivated for the duration of the two-semester course. As a result of the success indicated by Marchand's (2011) study, it was decided to continue to use authentic contemporary news articles to encourage student curiosity with the events of the outside world, or in other words, to take them beyond the more didactic style they may have already experienced in the traditional language learning classroom. This approach is also supported by previous studies into the benefits of using authentic materials (Rogers & Medley, 1998) which claim that contact with authentic language is, as Lahuerta Martínez (2003, p. 134) describes, "a discriminating factor in the acquisition of competence in the foreign language" enabled through communication based on the conveyance and perception of meaningful information.

Course Content and Materials

The core of each lesson was therefore an authentic news article, condensed and adapted from news websites such as BBC news or CNN by each teacher in turn every week. The news stories were chosen for both their inherent interest and currency: each story was about an event that had happened in the previous week and would possibly be familiar to students who followed events in the news. The structure of each lesson is represented in the table below and in the example materials in Appendix A. To maximize student interaction in class and facilitate language learning, as well as provide a way of dealing with the difficulties imposed by the use of authentic materials (Erbaggio, Gopalakrishnan, Hobbs, & Liu, 2010), a communicative approach using a task cycle was adopted, based on Marchand's (2011) previous syllabus (see Table 1). While the first stages of the task cycle are carried out in the classroom, it was the aim of the authors to facilitate an environment where students could extend their interaction with the materials and create a context where further learning could take place. The opportunities afforded by the use of digital media therefore became a central part of the design and administration of the course.

Table 1

Lesson Cycle

Focus on meaning	Warm up	• Introduce vocabulary • Prime schemata to familiarize students with the topic • Add communicative element
Focus on language	News article	• Read current news topic • Highlight vocabulary
Focus on form	Comprehension check	• Focus questions on comprehension and on particular grammar / lexical patterns
Report	Student opinions	• Students write their reaction to the news topic
Review	Vocabulary quiz	• Quiz students on topic words and common words • Reinforce grammatical / lexical patterns

Mode of Delivery

As the content of the course was to be shared between classes at different universities, the authors decided to create their own course website common to all classes. Fortunately, there are now many web-based tools available for teachers to create online content for their classes. These are, for the most part, extremely user-friendly with a great deal of clear instruction and support for novice users. After discussing various options, the authors decided to use the blogging tool Wordpress, which enables users to create personal and private websites, upload

materials, and administer access to the content. For these courses, the website would initially function as a medium through which students could gain access to the lesson content and materials, allowing them to prepare for the class as well as for later revision to prepare for quizzes and tests. This was a particularly important consideration, since learners can often experience anxiety or frustration when faced with the difficulties inherent in authentic texts such as news articles (Bacon & Finneman, 1990). However, as Erbaggio et al. (2010) argued, by presenting the materials online for self-access, students have more control over the pace of language input by governing when and how they engage with the materials.

In addition, the authors wanted to explore the possibility of using the website as a forum for discussion of the news stories, enabling the final report stage of the task cycle. Most news websites now offer their readers the opportunity to comment on articles. Replicating this type of online activity was therefore considered to be an appropriate way of prompting students to write and discuss their opinions. This would aim to promote learning through a more considered, deeper engagement with the materials. As Erbaggio et al. (2010) pointed out, with reference to Carmean and Haefner (2002), when learning is "social, active, contextual, engaging, and student-owned," it enables students to internalize more of the knowledge and skills they have been taught, resulting in a "meaningful understanding of material and content" (as cited in Erbaggio et al., 2010, p. 30). An activity of this kind would also go some way towards tackling what the authors had previously perceived as Japanese students' reticence in class. Erbaggio et al. (2010), in a case study of the use of online materials, discovered that social activities requiring students to interact with each other, instead of with their teacher in class, elicited a greater level of participation from those who were more reluctant to speak up in class discussions.

Finally, it was decided that students should be able to post comments anonymously, giving them greater freedom and comfort to voice their opinions than would be possible in the classroom. It was also believed that they would have less inhibition when making mistakes, allowing for greater experimentation with language use and expression. In short, the website would, in the opinion of the authors, aim to shift the traditional balance of power in the language classroom where, according to McGrath (1998), teachers become facilitators and students become active learners.

To maximize student participation given the anonymous posting system, the authors decided to make student comments part of their assessment and instructed students to post one comment after each news story. These comments could be a reaction to the news story, a reaction to any of the other comments posted or a combination of both. At the end of each semester, students were required to compile an online portfolio of their comments (see Appendix B). These were then assessed by each teacher based on the quality of the comment, with regard to both the content and use of language.

Student Use of the Website

The course has now run for two semesters of 15 weeks and during that time, the authors have witnessed an impressive amount of student activity on the class website as represented in Table 2.

Table 2
Use of the Website

Number of students	62
Number of news stories	15
Number of comments	859
Average number of comments per story	61
Average length of comment	72 words

The average number of comments per story shows that almost all students wrote one comment for each story, as instructed. While some of the comments were very short, perhaps one or two sentences, others were very long and involved, resulting in an average of 72 words per comment. Shorter comments may have been due to time constraints or lack of interest in the story, while longer comments show that some stories were particularly engaging. A few website comments are given here (language errors included), together with the respective news story headline and commentary. Further examples of comments can be found in Appendix C.

Obama Says Same-Sex Couples Should Be Able to Marry

> This is the first time to think of gay marriage for me. In Japan, it's the unrealistic ploblem yet. I suppose that gay couples' marriage should be admitted if they want to do, but I against adopting children. Because their children have no mother and that will cause many ploblems such as bullying at school, mental unrest etc. By the way, media says Mr. Obama's approval of such marriage is one of election campaigns. I'm interested in eligible voters' movement especially young people.

This comment draws attention to two points with relation to the authors' pedagogical aims in setting up the course. First, it is clear that the story has introduced a new topic to the student, engaging the student's curiosity with current events, a factor deemed necessary for motivation. Secondly, by addressing the issue of election campaigning and young people's voting intentions, the student demonstrates a meaningful understanding of the content and opens up the discussion to wider debate on the website.

Japanese Losing Ability to Write *Kanji* Due to Emails

> I agree with h********'s and r*******'s idea. We Japanese should continue writing Kanji by hand as our traditional culture. In addition I have another reason for this. These days some people that we need not write Kanji by hand because of computers and smartphones. However I think that we need write Kanji by hand to grow intelligence since we are children.

This comment demonstrates the development of the online discussion. By drawing on previous student comments, this student has created a dialogue between members that highlights the social aspect of the learning process as referred to by Erbaggio et al. (2010) in the previous section.

Nurse at Center of Duchess of Cambridge Hoax Call Dies in Case of Suspected Suicide

> I was very shocked about this news story. Duchess of Cambridge must have been shocked as well. First of all, I couldn't believe the insensitivities of these DJs. The nurses in the hospital must have been busy with the pregnancy of Kate, and it's too rude to dupe people in such a situation. In addition, it was written that one of the DJs boasted what they had done and it's so ridiculous. They might truly apologize as they apprehended the gravity of the situation, but they have to know it's too late. I hope they never repeat the mistake again.

Here the student has begun to experiment with the vocabulary and expressions introduced in the news story. Highlighted words from the story were *dupe* and *boast*. There is also evidence of use of vocabulary (*ridiculous*) from a previous story. This comment and others like it show that students are noticing lexical items and starting to acquire them through incorporation into their opinions on the website.

Feedback From Students About The Course

At the end of the academic year, a simple questionnaire in Japanese was administered to all students to acquire some initial feedback about their opinions of using the materials and the course website. Students were asked how their experience of the course had an impact on their language learning and motivation. A selection of comments translated from the original Japanese are represented in Appendix D and briefly discussed here. Firstly, it seems that using authentic news-based materials was, in the words of one student, "a very good idea . . . By learning about news in the world, I could not only study English but also learn about foreign countries, people, and cultures." Moreover, providing materials online was a welcome novelty to some: "writing a blog was very new and interesting," and "the course was very different from the classes in high school, and I found it very new." This also helped engage some to study more often; as one student mentions, "To be prepared for the Monday class, I had to read English over the weekend. Because of this, I was able to study English more regularly." More importantly, with respect to the pedagogical aims of the course, many of the comments seem to indicate that students had increased their motivation through writing their opinions on the class website. In particular, the social aspect of learning seems to have been a success in this regard: "It was good and motivating for me to compare my opinion with other students' ones." It can also be seen that students were inspired to pay more attention to their use of English: "Because the comments were read by other students, I tried to express my opinions in an easily understood way, which I think helped me to improve my English," and, "Even though we exchanged opinions anonymously, the comments were read by other students, which helped me to keep the motivation and to be more careful about grammar, etc." These comments clearly demonstrate that student writing on the website helped facilitate the report stage of the task cycle that aims to focus learners on producing more considered, accurate language.

While many of the comments show how students engaged positively with the course and materials, there are also those who mentioned that they were still struggling with the high level "technical" language needed, and wanted greater clarification and feedback on their use of English. To address these points, the authors need to consider ways in which advice to students can be incorporated into the course without encroaching on the freedom of the blog writing. With a large corpus of learner English now in place in the form of comments on the class website, however, it is hoped that further research into students' use of language will be of significant benefit in the planning and materials design of subsequent news-based courses delivered online.

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Obama says same-sex couples should be able to marry. (2012, May 9). *BBC*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-18014102

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Appendix A
Example Lesson Materials
News Based English – Political News

Warm-Up 1a: Countries where same-sex marriage is legal

Which countries do you think have already legalized same-sex marriage? Write your ideas in the table below (number of countries in each area).

Europe (7)	Africa (1)	North America (1)	South America (1)

Warm-Up 1b: What rights should same sex couples have?

Read the rights below and indicate whether you think same-sex couples should have them. Then ask your partner their opinion. Support your opinions with reasons.

Rights	You	Your Partner
1. To live together 2. To get married 3. To get tax benefits 4. To make medical decisions for their partner 5. To adopt children		

Warm-Up 2: Predicting the news

Obama says same-sex couples should be able to marry

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

a. President Obama supports same-sex marriage. T / F
b. 50% of Americans support same-sex marriage. T / F
c. More Americans support gay marriage than last year. T / F
d. Mr Obama's government has increased other rights for gay people. T / F
e. Mr Obama reached his decision after seeing committed gay relationships among members of his family. T / F
f. Many US states have already passed laws banning same-sex marriages. T / F
g. Mitt Romney, who is running for president against Mr Obama, also supports gay marriage. T / F
h. Mr Romney believes that gay people should have the right to visit their partners in hospital. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

1.	hedging	a.	law
2.	back	b.	faithful
3.	administration	c.	support
4.	repeal	d.	evasion
5.	act	e	restrict
6.	monogamous	f.	alteration
7.	constrain	g.	dividing
8.	amendment	h.	suitable
9.	polarizing	i.	abolish
10.	appropriate	j.	government

Obama says same-sex couples should be able to marry
("Obama Says," 2012)

	cohesion
WASHINGTON - US President Barack Obama has ended months of hedging on the issue of gay marriage by saying he thinks same-sex couples should be able to wed. He has become the first sitting US president to **back** gay marriage. A recent poll suggested that 50% of Americans were in favour of legalising gay marriage - a slightly lower proportion than last year - while 48% said they would **oppose** such a move.	he = president = they = move =
In an interview with ABC News Mr Obama said, "I've concluded that for me personally it is important for me to go ahead and **affirm** that I think same-sex couples should be able to get married." He pointed to his administration's commitment to increasing rights for gay citizens. He gave as an example his administration's repeal of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy* and said they had dropped support for the Defense of Marriage Act.	me = example = they =
He said that he wanted to make his views clear after seeing gay members of his own staff who were in "incredibly *committed monogamous* relationships", and service personnel who felt *constrained* by not being able to wed. His comments come a day after North Carolina **approved** a *constitutional* amendment effectively **banning** same-sex marriage or civil unions. The Obama campaign had opposed that measure, which was passed with 61% in favour and 39% against. In the US, 31 states have passed constitutional amendments or legislation against same-sex marriage.	who = who = which =
Meanwhile, Mr Romney set the stage for an election year clash over the *polarising* social issue by saying he was against gay marriage. The former Massachusetts governor told a Fox News reporter: "I do not favour marriage between people of the same gender, and I do not favour civil unions if they are identical to marriage other than by name. "My view is the domestic partnership benefits, hospital visitation rights, and the like are *appropriate* but that the others are not."	governor = they = the like =

**A policy in which members of the military had to keep silent about their sexuality at the risk of losing their jobs*

Vocabulary in bold	=	**verbs**
Vocabulary underlined	=	nouns
Vocabulary in italics	=	*adjectives*

Comprehension Check

Student A's Questions (Do not show these to Student B)

1a. How did you feel when you read the headline?
2a. Who was the first sitting US President to back gay marriage?
3a. What percentage of Americans oppose gay marriage?
4a. Why did Mr Obama want to make his views on gay marriage clear?
5a. How many states have also passed laws that ban gay marriage?
6a. What are Mitt Romney's views on gay marriage?
7a. Why do you think gay marriage is such a big issue in the US?
8a. With B, check the cohesion to the right of the article. What do all the words / phrases refer to?
9a. With B, go back to the true or false sentences. Now check the synonyms 1-10 again.
10a. Was this news: too difficult / okay / too easy for you?

Student B's Questions (Do not show these to Student A)

1b. Did you think this article was interesting?
2b. What percentage of Americans support gay marriage?
3b. What was the American military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy?
4b. Which state recently approved a law that bans gay marriage?
5b. Who is Mitt Romney?
6b. What rights for gay people does Mr Romney approve of?
7b. Do you think that gay marriage will ever be legal in Japan? Why? Why not?
8b. With A, check the cohesion to the right of the article. What do all the words / phrases refer to?
9b. With A, go back to the true or false sentences. Now check the synonyms 1-10 again.
10b. Was this news: too difficult / okay / too easy for you?

My thoughts:

Appendix B

Portfolio of Comments for Assessment (Online Form)

Please fill out the portfolio questions below and send it to me (*required question)

What is your name? (in English) *

Top 4 Quiz Scores *
Please input your best quiz score

Top 4 Quiz Scores *
Please input your second best quiz score

Top 4 Quiz Scores *
Please input your third best quiz score

Top 4 Quiz Scores *
Please input your fourth best quiz score

My thoughts - Society News *
Please copy your comments here

My thoughts - Technology News *
Please copy your comments here

My thoughts - Art News *
Please copy your comments here

My thoughts - International News *
Please copy your comments here

My thoughts - Science News *
Please copy your comments here

My thoughts - Barack Obama's Odyssey Continues *
Please copy your comments here

My thoughts - Company News *
Please copy your comments here

My thoughts - UK News *
Please copy your comments here

My thoughts - Abe to become Japan's 7th PM in 6 years *
Please copy your comments here

Lesson review - Which article did you find the most interesting? *
Write the headline of the article below

Lesson review - Which article did you find the most interesting? *
Explain why it was interesting for you

Quiz review - Which quiz story did you find the most interesting? (Can be either Part A or Part B) *
Explain why it was interesting for you

Blog review - Which comment did you strongly agree with? *
Copy and paste the comment below

Blog review - Which comment did you strongly agree with? *
Explain why you agreed with it

Blog review - Which comment did you strongly disagree with? *
Copy and paste the comment below

Blog review - Which comment did you strongly disagree with? *
Explain why you disagreed with it

Class Participation *
How do you feel about your participation in the class this semester?

Thank you for all your hard work this semester and good luck in the final test!

Appendix C
Sample of Student Comments on the News Story
"Obama Says Same Sex Couples Should Be Able to Marry"

In my opinion, same-sex couples should be able to get married. Of course, I know there are various religions in the United States and some people think it is a bad thing. I think it is difficult that ALL citizens agree with guy marriage. There are lots of opinions in the country. But I think "the government" should not ban the marriage. If it ban the marriage because they are same-sex, does the government disturb the citizen's freedom of the marriage? If they love with each other and want to wed, the government can't ban the marriage.
I don't agree with Obama. It's true that many form of love exist and I don't condemn itself, but Gay is ethically problematic. They can't leave offspring, so government shouldn't admit officially. That's the reason why I disagree with same sex couple marriage.
I'm in favor of gay marriage. The most important thing in democracy is to respect personal thoughts. Besides marriage is one of the most important event in our life. Therefore, gay marriage should be admitted.
I think homosexuality should be permit.
For my part, at present, I can't agree to the same-sex marriage. It is said some people are afraid of being loved by gay people, and also said the birthrate in the country may decline. Both of them I 'm afraid too. On the contrary, however, these view may have some misconceptions. And history tells us that there were many gay people in ancient Greece and the Warring States period of Japan, which indicates the gay rights is not necessarily the problem specific to today. Moreover,the jaoaneseTV programes show that there are many gay people who is proud of themselves. The more japanese people know them, the more they may be tolerate to the gay. In conclusion, now i'm against gay marriage, but in the future, I'll change my thoughts if I have more information about gay people.
When I read this article, I was very surprised, and thought this is very good news. In many countries and areas, same sex couple are not recognized by the public. Obama did so courageous decision. I wish this Obama's new method succeed. And,I think that japan also have to recognized gay's marriage right.
This is the first time to think of gay marriage for me. In Japan, it's the unrealistic ploblem yet. I suppose that gay couples' marriage should be admitted if they want to do, but I against adopting children. Because their children have no mother and that will cause many ploblems such as bullying at school, mental unrest etc. By the way, media says Mr. Obama's approval of such marriage is one of election campaigns. I'm interested in eligible voters' movement especially young people.
I agree with Obama's opinion. However same sex marry is not accepted in Japan, same sex marry is proper. It is because they have right to get married with a lover.
I favor gay marriage. It is one of the human rights.
I agree with homosexual marriages. I think prohibiting gay marriages runs counter to human rights. We investigate gay people's human rights with respect to marriage. In my opinion, happiness possessing rights, equality rights and privacy rights are violated in this scenario. The entitlement of happiness possessing rights is already guaranteed by first amendment in Virginia Bill of Rights. It is stipulated in 13rd amendment of constitution of japan too. Freedoms without distinction of any kind of status are guaranteed by Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The constitutions of most countries guarantee this right too. And in 2003, Texas Supreme Court judged that the prohibition of homosexual activity is against the right of privacy. Actually, many countries like Portugal, Belgium, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, South Africa, Canada, Argentina permit same sex couple marriage. In fact the Netherlands have law of anti-distinction. According to this law, gays have the same rights as heterosexual couples. These are reason why I agree with same sex couple marriage.

I disagree with Obama's opinion. Gay must be prohibited strictly. There is only one reason to think so. Gay is not correct in ethics. A living thing in the earth have to leave offspring.
As most people here say, I agree with legalising gay marriage. Whether you love same-sex or opposite sex depends on you. It is wrong that nation prohibits guy marriage. However as h********* points out, whether same-sev couple should be allowed to adopt children or not is big and complicated question. Same-sex couple should be allowed right same as opposite-sex couple but considering children, children should be brought up by mother and father.
I think same sex marriage should be legal. Same sex couple just love each other so I dont want them to give up to get marry because of the gender. But I think same sex couple should not have the right to adopt children unless the children understand about it.
I think it is individual freedom. Although I'm against to this. I expect that permitting same-sex marriage will cause a lot of social problems.
I believe that same-sex couple should be equal with others. As y******* say, I think the religious is the matter for them. Christian don't allow the same-sex marriage, and that is why same-sex couples are difficult to marriage. I know the religious is important for them, however, it is strange that human don't have same equal right. We are all equal before the low. I strongly support same-sex couple.

Appendix D

Selection of Responses for the Questionnaire Item:

Please write any thoughts you may have about writing on a news-based blog for this course in terms of improving your English-language skills and motivation.

The question and comments have been translated from the original Japanese.

Positive Feedback	• In this news-based, blog writing class, it was easier to express opinions because of anonymous posting system. As no one could identify whose opinions they were, it was easy to express real feelings and this somehow helped to keep the motivation. Even though we exchanged opinions anonymously, the comments were read by other students, which helped me to keep the motivation and to be more careful about grammar, etc. • Writing my opinions on the news on blogs helped me to keep my motivation high. It was also good to know other students' opinions. • It was a very good idea to use news as English learning materials. By learning about news in the world, I could not only study English but also learn about foreign countries, people, and cultures. • Using blogs and the Internet in the class was very new to me as nothing like this class was in high school. I liked this class because I could do the assignment anywhere as long as I had a PC. • It is easy to read news in English and write opinions in Japanese. However, writing opinions in English was challenging and therefore this was effective to improve English. By writing down, I could check my level of writing more carefully. • I could constantly use English in an authentic sense. Using a blog, writing was very new and interesting. • It was good and motivating for me to compare my opinion with other students' ones. Because the comments were read by other students, I tried to express my opinions in the easily understood way, which I think helped me to improve my English. • By writing blogs in this class, I got accustomed to using computers. This also increased opportunities to read and watch news on the Internet. To be prepared for the Monday class, I had to read English over the weekend. Because of this, I was able to study English more regularly. The course was very different from the classes in high school, and I found it very new. • It was good to read authentic English. I could learn new vocabulary which I had never seen when I studied English for the entrance examinations.
Somewhat Negative Feedback	• I didn't find blog writings easy to use and not necessarily motivating to study. However, I found the class and the learning interesting and meaningful especially because I could read a lot of current news. I would like to continue to read news in English in order to improve my English. • Using news was effective but at the same time was very difficult because of technical vocabulary. I personally preferred to write on the paper and hand it in. However, it was interesting to be able to read other students' opinions. • I was sometimes not sure about my grammar. I would like my English checked from time to time. • It was difficult to keep up with the high level of English in this class.

About *Language Education in Asia*

Background Information

Language Education in Asia is a publication that presents well-researched aspects of language education and learning, innovative, practical approaches to classroom practice, and discussion of relevant issues in the field of TESOL in the Asian region. Papers can be submitted by educators, educational leaders, and researchers; all papers are blind-reviewed by members of the Editorial Board. Beginning with the 2011 Volume, accepted papers are published on a biannual basis. Submissions are welcome and will be considered in an ongoing process throughout the year. The first issue of each volume will highlight exceptional papers presented at the annual CamTESOL Conference Series during that publication year. Each volume is initially online for public viewing on the CamTESOL website: http://www.camtesol.org/

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Notes to Prospective Contributors

The readership of *Language Education in Asia* is comprised of Asian and expatriate educators as well as those from international institutions. *Language Education in Asia* encourages the submission of papers presenting innovative approaches of interest to both local and international audiences. The development context of Asian TESOL should be considered; most schools have limited resources and teachers often have to contend with large numbers of students in their classrooms. The Editorial Board takes into account the regional context as well as areas of interest for international participants when selecting papers for publication.

The *Language Education in Asia* online publication includes three sections:

- Research highlighting ongoing projects in the Asian region, based on and emphasising a practical focus in the discussion and conclusion sections. Maximum 5,000 words.

- Teaching Practice focusing on classroom-based and action research more directly related to the realities of language teaching in the region. Maximum 3,500 words.

- Commentary focusing on well-researched, balanced reports and discussions of current or emerging issues in the Asian region. Maximum 2,000 words.

For more details concerning specific guidelines, formatting, and submission, please refer to the *Language Education in Asia* page on the CamTESOL website at http://www.camtesol.org/
For any questions, please contact the Editor-in-Chief, Ms. Kelly Kimura, at leia@idp.com.
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The language learning and teaching context in the Asian region is as varied and complex as the countries encompassed in this part of the world. Each context is defined by the history and culture of each specific country and the region as a whole and the language policies and languages involved, including a myriad of local, indigenous, colonial, and "global" languages.

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