

# Language Education in Asia



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**LEiA**  
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**CAMTESOL**

## Table of Contents

### **Editors' Note**

Lessons Learned Through LEiA <i>Kelly Kimura</i>	64
---	----

### **Research**

Exploring the Effectiveness of Communication Strategies Through Pro-Active Listening in ELF-Informed Pedagogy <i>Blagoja Dimoski, Yuri Jody Yujobo, &amp; Mitsuko Imai</i>	67
---	----

English Through Culturally Familiar Contexts: A Pilot Study in Japan <i>Robert Sheridan, Kathryn M. Tanaka, &amp; Nicholas Hogg</i>	88
--	----

Responsive Turns in L2 Discussion Tasks: A Conversation Analysis Perspective <i>Huong Quynh Tran</i>	100
---	-----

Developing Learner Autonomy: The Perceptions and Needs of Japanese EFL Learners <i>Koki Tomita &amp; Maho Sano</i>	114
---	-----

### **About *Language Education in Asia***

<i>Background Information</i>	131
-------------------------------	-----

<i>Advisory Board</i>	131
-----------------------	-----

<i>Editorial Board</i>	132
------------------------	-----

<i>Disclaimer</i>	135
-------------------	-----

<i>Notes to Prospective Contributors</i>	135
--	-----

<i>Copyright and Permission to Print</i>	135
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## ***Editor's Note***

# **Lessons Learned Through LEiA**

**Kelly Kimura**

About nine years ago, I was working on a textbook project with a colleague when he asked me to proofread a few papers as a favor. I proofread them from a standpoint of ignorance on the topics (as I sometimes still do) and returned them with comments and questions scribbled in the margins. To my surprise, he then asked me to look at more papers, and so started an unexpected phase in my life, leaving the textbook long unfinished. That colleague was Richmond Stroupe, who at the time was the editor-in-chief of *CamTESOL Selected Papers* and who then became the first editor-in-chief of this publication. In the years since, the last four of them as editor-in-chief, I have learned many lessons through my work with LEiA. Here are just a few.

I have learned that every paper published in our peer-reviewed journal truly requires a community of volunteer editors and others willing to devote the necessary time and effort to support it to publication. We have been the grateful recipients of many fine and interesting papers, but have yet to come across what I think of as a “unicorn” paper—one that has been unanimously deemed “publishable as is” by all of its review editors. (For new authors worried about competition from more established authors, our review editors, who receive blinded papers—with the author’s name and other identifying information removed—treat all papers impartially, as do the editors who do see the authors’ names.) However, even that paper and its author would need this community. The community, which has never failed to come together to support “our” authors as professional peers, does not consist of only the review editors who provide feedback for submissions. Before the review editors, there is the editor-in-chief, the editorial assistant, and editors who assist in screening. If the paper successfully passes the screening and review stages, there is the senior review editor who manages the revision process, the copy editor, and again, the editor-in-chief and the editorial assistant. Finally, there is the publication assistant who puts the paper and its links on the website. Importantly, our supporting organization, IDP Education Cambodia, provides us with our part-time editorial assistant and makes the formation of this community possible.

A powerful lesson I have learned is that an author who has perseverance may be more likely to see her paper published than one who has an initially stronger paper but does not have the same commitment. I realize that some authors may assume that once submitted, papers can be put safely out of their minds; they may find revisiting and revising their papers tedious. I also realize that it can be difficult not to take feedback personally, even if it is constructive: each submission represents a great deal of work by the author, and the feedback may seem like criticism of the author’s research, critical thinking, language skills, writing skills, and / or even of the author himself. However, each author should know that when we request revisions, we see our work as supportively guiding that author in preparing the paper for public viewing—where the work can be held up to the reader’s eyes with all seams securely sewn, no rips in the fabric,

and no buttons left unbuttoned. Yet there are times when papers “disappear” without notification at some point in the publication process. There are of course many good reasons why an author does not or cannot continue. What I hope authors realize even before submission is that at each stage in the LEiA publication process, a considerable amount of time and effort is dedicated to every paper, all at no monetary cost to the author. From my experience, it would not be unusual for a paper that reaches publication with us to have had fifty to one hundred hours or more of work put in it by our generous community. Our dedication is rendered fruitless when an author decides not to continue pursuing publication with us. I encourage authors to persevere, to expect that there will be requests for revisions, to keep an open mind about revising their work, and to take the initiative to communicate with us if they encounter any problems. If, for example, an author does not know how to address certain points in the feedback, we are here to explain; if more time is absolutely necessary to revise, we will try to make allowances as far as our publication schedule and our own schedules permit. In these cases, papers may ultimately be published in the next issue.

Another important lesson I have learned is that papers come in all shapes and sizes, that is, they are all unique, and all have something to offer. Papers on a wide range of ELT practice and research in Asia are submitted to us by every March 8th, reflecting different voices, ideas, perspectives, and insights. This variety adds an element of excitement and the feeling of discovery to our work. Whether submissions finally appear in LEiA or not, they are valuable in their own ways; I know my own practice has been informed by the hundreds of papers that I have read. It has been difficult to turn away submissions and wonder if the value they contain will ever be shared in published form; this is one major reason why John Middlecamp and Alan Klein established the Peer Reader Program described in the Editor’s Note in Issue 1. We hope to see published papers from authors participating in the program in the coming years, whether in LEiA or other journals. I also encourage authors who have not been able to publish to seek supportive colleagues or mentors and learn from each submission so that they can hone their craft and begin to contribute on a wider platform.

I have been reflecting on what I have learned from my experience with LEiA because I will be soon leaving this position to start a new phase in my life, which may even include a textbook or two. While I am looking toward the future, I know that I will more than occasionally look back at my time with LEiA with appreciation and some amazement. It has been a great privilege to work with so many authors and editors as they contribute to the field. I hope that I have in some small way supported the thoughtful and informed development of English language teaching and research in the Asian region, particularly in the ASEAN region, for the betterment of students’ learning and lives.

In the meantime, we have been very busy: two new LEiA books will be launched at the 2017 CamTESOL Conference.

The first is *Asian-Focused ELT Research and Practice: Voices from the Far Edge*. I was very fortunate to co-edit this book with John Middlecamp. John also contributed an eloquent introductory chapter on a topic of vital importance to LEiA: “The Developing Research Community of NNEST Scholars Serving Asia and the World.” The rest of the chapters, which are drawn from Volumes 4 and 5, are by (in the order of placement in the book) Yilin Sun; Richmond Stroupe; Linda Mary Hanington; Huong Quynh Tran; Chun-Chun Yeh; Asako Takaesu; Luna Jing Cai; Virak Chan; Sathya Chea and Lee Shumow; Dittthayanan Punyaratabandhu, Edward Rush, Michael J. Kleindl and Paul Wadden; Brian Paltridge; and Greg Rouault. While there were other interesting articles in these two volumes, making the selection difficult, John and I selected those articles which together showcase a variety of

contexts and research in the region and those which offer perspectives on language education and practical guidance on research and publication.

The second is a monograph, *Developing Classroom English Competence: Learning from the Vietnam Experience*, co-edited by Donald Freeman and Laura Le Dréan. Donald Freeman, Anne Burns, and Anne Katz, along with Apiwan Nuangpolmak, Le Duc Manh, Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen, and Pham Thi Hong Nhung, contributed chapters. The monograph is centered around an innovative online professional development program, *English-for-Teaching*.

Turning to Volume 7, Issue 2, we offer four research articles. To begin, Blagoja Dimoski, Yuri Jody Yujobo, and Mitsuko Imai, from the first center for English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in Japan, use an ELF-informed framework to investigate whether explicitly teaching communication strategies using pro-active listening activities improves university EFL learners' communication. In pro-active listening activities, listeners have the opportunity to ask the speakers to perform actions such as repeating or clarifying what they have said, letting both participate in constructing meaning. Robert Sheridan, Kathryn M. Tanaka, and Nicholas Hogg, also in Japan, report on the effectiveness of culturally familiar contexts in texts on university EFL learners' recall of vocabulary and understanding of content. They compare the performance of two classes on pretests and posttests on news articles with either culturally familiar or unfamiliar contexts and find that culturally familiar contexts may positively influence learning. Next, in Vietnam, from a conversation analysis perspective, Huong Quynh Tran examines university students' construction of responsive turns to achieve topic extension in discussion tasks in English. The analysis showed that the conversations of the participants, who were at the pre-intermediate level of English, displayed four turn construction features: repeating words or grammatical structures, giving reasons for answers, looking away from the interlocutor when trying to think of a word in English, and using the L1 to think of a word in English. Last, Koki Tomita and Maho Sano investigate the views of Japanese university EFL learners at two proficiency levels on learner autonomy through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Based on their findings, they suggest some practices suitable for each of the two proficiency levels that teachers can implement to enhance their students' learner autonomy.

In closing, I would like to thank the authors of these four papers for their patient perseverance in bringing their papers to publication. My thanks also go to the hardworking editorial team – the senior review editors and copy editors who supported these and other papers, and the editorial assistants, Sokhom Leang and Panha Nov, who were both involved in work for this issue. I am also grateful for the valuable feedback on papers from the review editors on the Editorial Board and the continued support LEiA receives from the Advisory Board, IDP Education Cambodia, and UECA: University English Centres Australia. Thanks also go to all of the authors who submitted papers for Volume 7; I expect to see some of the papers that did not appear in this volume in Volume 8.

Lastly, I thank our readers and hope they find this issue of interest.

## **Research**

# **Exploring the Effectiveness of Communication Strategies Through Pro-Active Listening in ELF-Informed Pedagogy**

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This study explores the effectiveness of communication strategies (CSs) through pro-active listening (PAL) comprehension activities for students to actively negotiate and co-construct meaning in an English as a lingua franca (ELF)-informed pedagogy. Data was collected from fifty-three Japanese students in classes at the Center for English as a Lingua Franca (CELF) at Tamagawa University. Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. Responses to a pre- and post- questionnaire on the perceived effectiveness of CS use, transcribed speech collected during PAL comprehension activities, and written reflections by students were analyzed. The findings suggest that an ELF-informed pedagogy of explicit teaching of CSs increases students' perceived ability to use CSs effectively in PAL activities. ELF pedagogy should incorporate opportunities for students to explicitly learn and use CSs independently to become competent international communicators among other ELF speakers.

The number of non-native users of English worldwide vastly exceeds that of native speakers (Graddol, 2003). This discrepancy is expected to grow, resulting in 1.2 billion non-native users (p. 163) and 433 million native speakers (p. 156) by 2050. Given this context, it is important for educators to realize that their non-native English speaking (NNES) students may find themselves in various work or social situations requiring communication with people from other countries who are not native speakers of English. English language educators should steer their approach in the direction of English as a lingua franca (ELF), defined by Seidlhofer (2011) as the "use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (p. 7).

Tamagawa University's Center for English as a Lingua Franca (CELF), the first such center in Japan, designed its program to promote an ELF setting, as it recognizes the potential future need

for students to use ELF and interact with a variety of English users. The CELF also employs NNES teachers with multilingual and multicultural backgrounds to promote an ELF setting. CELF Program students have rich opportunities to interact with these teachers in formal classroom settings and informal one-on-one tutoring sessions. The CELF's goal for ELF proficiency of students is not to reach native English norms, but rather, to achieve "competence in a repertoire of English varieties" (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 229). The CELF finds ELF-informed pedagogy a preferred method to develop an ELF-oriented curriculum which involves raising an awareness of the use of language and the negotiation and accommodation of linguistic form and meaning. This may include, according to ELF researchers (Björkman, 2014; Kaur, 2014; Wen, 2012), incorporating communication strategies (CSs).

Few formal studies have been done on ELF pedagogy. Choi and Jeon (2016) claimed that thus far, "ELF pedagogy has been mostly discussed at only a conceptual level and pedagogical research is scarce" (p. 1). Therefore, the authors were motivated to research the effectiveness of explicit teaching of CSs through pro-active listening (PAL) comprehension activities. Data was collected by a questionnaire administered pre- and post-CS training, analysis of transcribed dialogic speech, and written student reflections to determine the effect explicit teaching of CSs through PAL activities had on student perceptions of improvement in their communication skills. This paper consists of five main parts: the literature review and research questions, methodology, major findings, discussion, and conclusion.

## Literature Review

### ELF and CSs

Seidlhofer (2011) claimed that in ELF interactions, the primary focus is on communicative efficiency and what people actually do with the language they have learned. Of importance is how one communicates in English as an additional language, rather than setting native speaker competence as the target, and analyzes ELF interactions of high functional load around, for instance, pronunciation, through various strategies and processes to achieve mutual understanding to co-construct meaning. One of the ways to co-construct meaning is through the use of CSs. Examples of CSs discussed in ELF literature include, but are not limited to, accommodation, repetition, nonverbal strategies, hypothesis forming (Cogo & Dewey, 2012), seeking clarification, checking for understanding, paraphrasing, and being explicit (Kaur, 2014).

Although there is much alignment between CSs in ELF and non-ELF interactions, achievement or compensatory strategies (e.g., using circumlocution, approximation, or gestures) are more prevalent in ELF settings (Björkman, 2014). Björkman, who categorized CSs into self-initiated and other-initiated types, found that in ELF settings, the most frequently occurring self-initiated CSs were explicitness strategies and comprehension checks, while in other-initiated CSs, confirmation checks and clarification requests were the most common. This suggests "speakers in ELF settings do pro-active work for communicative effectiveness" (p. 129).

However, discussion of CSs in the literature has focused, in large part, on ELF *users* (see Björkman, 2014; Burch, 2014; Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Kaur, 2016; Mauranen, 2012). In contrast, the focus of the current study is ELF *learners* preparing for real-world ELF contexts.

### ELF-Informed Pedagogical Framework

The authors used Wen's (2012) pedagogical framework for an ELF-informed approach which emphasizes that learners should not replicate what was taught, but rather "use it as a means for developing effective communication strategies related to their own cultural reality" (p. 373). The framework is unique in that it encompasses views about *both* language and teaching on

three levels. Language is viewed in terms of its (a) linguistic, (b) cultural, and (c) pragmatic functions, which correspond to the pedagogical goals of (a) effective communication skills, (b) intercultural competence, and (c) abilities to generate appropriate communicative rules and strategies.

Although a thorough implementation of Wen's (2012) shift in pedagogic orientation was beyond the scope of this study, aspects of the framework were realized to some degree. Following Wen's recommendations regarding the linguistic component of the framework, warm-up lesson material was developed with the aim of (a) exposing students to language and subject matter which is relevant to their own life experiences from a cultural perspective and (b) prioritizing effective communication skills over native-like performance. Wen also stated that, phonologically, students should be "able to produce comprehensible English and understand English with non-native accents" (p. 374). Concerning cultural objectives, the warm-up questions, the main lesson content, and the follow-up discussion questions provided opportunities for students to reflect on three types of cultures: "target language cultures, the cultures of other non-native speakers, and the learner's own culture" (p. 374). Regarding pragmatics, students were explicitly taught CSs to develop strategic competence.

**PAL comprehension.** PAL comprehension is an approach that transforms traditional forms of listening comprehension (LC) activities, in which students are passive receptors of auditory input, into dialogic events more reflective of real-world processes. PAL does this by adding another layer to standard LC activities to make the source of auditory input accessible to students (see Dimoski, 2016). This is achieved by providing students with transcripts of listening texts and allowing them to read the texts aloud to each other in pairs. Rather than receiving the listening text via *technology* (e.g., a CD player), which students have no control over, the auditory input comes from a fellow *human being* (i.e., a classmate).

According to Björkman (2010), "monologic events, where the listener has few opportunities, if any, to check his / her own understanding, are where misunderstandings and general comprehension problems are most likely to occur" (p. 85). Thus, PAL allows the listener to interact with the listening source when non-understanding occurs through the application of CSs to negotiate meaning with the speaker (i.e., their partner). PAL also enables the speaker, while playing the role of the person whose transcript is being read aloud (and displaying a picture of the person to create a sense of realism), to repeat or reformulate information to accommodate the listener. Hence, unlike traditional models based on monologic speech, which require students to listen passively for extended lengths of time (Björkman, 2010), PAL creates opportunities for students to work collaboratively to negotiate and co-construct meaning.

In ELF-aware pedagogy, including in this study in which all the subjects were Japanese, the features of PAL are significant. According to Kaur (2014), collaborative class work such as role plays that mimic ELF-type scenarios, particularly if realistic, can generate valuable opportunities for learners to practice a variety of CSs. Björkman (2010) acknowledged that interactive speech events incorporating CSs and "proactive work that enhances understanding and prevents misunderstanding . . . [are] very useful communicative behavior" (p. 86). Clearly then, in ELF-oriented pedagogy, LC that is pro-active is a step in the right direction, and even more so when the content that students are negotiating comes from non-native English speakers from a different culture.

Importantly, the PAL approach is not a replacement of traditional LC, but an alternative. Educators, based on their learners' needs, can judge whether to employ traditional LC, PAL, or both (Dimoski, 2016). In this study, traditional-type LC was used in a pre-PAL activity to

expose students to non-native accents and varieties of English since, in terms of Wen's (2012) linguistic objectives, "students are expected to understand what non-native speakers say in English" (p. 374).

To the authors' knowledge, no other research has attempted to combine these two approaches, thus making this the first empirical study to incorporate the PAL approach proposed by Dimoski (2016).

### **Research Aims**

This study aims to explore students' ability to communicate effectively during PAL comprehension activities in an intercultural context, both prior to and upon completion of explicit CS training. To investigate this, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What effect does explicit teaching of CSs have on students' perceived ability to use CSs effectively?
2. Does the explicit teaching of CSs enable students to become more competent communicators during PAL activities?
3. What influence do students perceive an ELF-informed intercultural framework incorporating PAL and CSs has on their communication skills?

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants**

Participants in the study consisted of 53 first-year and second-year university students ranging from 18 to 19 years of age from three classes within the ELF program. Fifteen participants (5 males, 10 females) were second-year students in the ELF 301 (intermediate level) class from the Department of International Management, while the remaining 38 participants (19 males, 19 females) were freshmen in two ELF 202 (lower-intermediate level) classes. Students in one of the ELF 202 classes were from the Department of Education, and in the other, all students belonged to the Department of International Management. Students are placed in levels when they enter the program based on TOEIC Bridge scores, corresponding to TOEIC IP test scores of 400-449 for ELF 202 and 450-509 for ELF 301. Typically, Japanese university students have accumulated six years of experience studying English as a subject prior to entering university.

Because this study incorporated potentially challenging authentic listening texts, the authors selected their highest-level classes for the study. These classes were also conducted during the same period, thus allowing the authors to combine all three classes on three occasions.

Importantly, all 53 students were willing participants in the study and provided their written consent prior to the commencement of the project.

#### **Data Collection**

The data was triangulated to help to deepen understanding, minimize potential bias, and increase validity of the data (Olsen, 2004). Data collection in this study included (a) the administering of a pre- and post-practice Likert-type scale questionnaire to all participants and analysis of the responses; (b) the recording, transcription, and analysis of 12 randomly selected participants' dialogical speech; and (c) the analysis of all participants' post-project reflections written in English or in Japanese.

**Pre- and post-practice questionnaire.** The authors developed a pre- and post-practice questionnaire featuring a five-point Likert-type scale (see Appendix A), ensuring all of the participants were asked “precisely the same questions in an identical format and responses. . . [were] recorded in a uniform manner” (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2004, p. 1313) to increase its reliability. The questionnaire was administered to elicit responses from students regarding their perceived ability to use six CSs effectively and their overall ability to use CSs. For each of the seven items, five responses were provided: *Strongly disagree*, *Disagree*, *Neutral*, *Agree*, and *Strongly agree*. All Japanese translations in the questionnaire were written by one of the authors, a native Japanese speaker, and then checked by another native Japanese speaker. Before commencing the CS training sessions, the students responded to all seven items to establish their perceived pre-practice ability to use the CSs effectively. Upon completion of each of the training sessions, students responded to the respective item in the post-practice section. Data and statistics derived from the questionnaire results are descriptive and were used to observe general outcomes.

**CS training sessions.** CS training consisted of six sessions, each lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The CSs included CS A, asking for confirmation; CS B, asking for repetition; CS C, asking for confirmation of word meaning; CS D, asking for clarification of sentence meaning; CS E, paraphrasing; CS F, using body language; and CS G, overall use of the strategies. These CSs are relevant to ELF contexts (for CSs A to E, see Björkman, 2014; for CS F, see Dimoski, 2016).

Regarding materials used in all the activities during this project, efforts were made to maintain consistency. Original materials, developed specifically for the CS training sessions, consisted of information-gap-type activities designed for students to focus on one strategy per session. The worksheet for CS E incorporated elements reflective of PAL practice (see Appendix B).

Because research for this study was conducted during regular class periods with fixed schedules, opportunities for the authors to combine their classes were limited. It was possible to combine 100-minute classes on three occasions, however, which helped to minimize variability in the data collected. The training session for CS A was conducted in the first combined class on December 9, 2015, following collection of pre-CS training dialogic data during the first half of the lesson. Training for CS E was done in the second combined class on December 21. A final training session to review all of the strategies (CS G) was conducted during the third combined class on January 13, 2016, prior to collection of post-CS training dialogic data during the latter half of the lesson. CSs B, C, D, and F were taught by the authors in their individual classes, using the same lesson material to maximize consistency.

**Recording and transcription of dialogic speech.** The second phase of this project involved the audio and video recording of students’ dialogic speech during combined classes on two occasions, once on December 9, 2015 prior to the explicit teaching of CSs, and once on January 13, 2016 after all of the CS training sessions had been completed. For data collection during PAL, six randomly selected student pairs (A1 / B1 to A6 / B6) were placed in a separate room at the same time, where their interactions were recorded for later analysis. Students were not informed that they would be asked to repeat the same process in January. In the January combined class, Student A1 was absent, thus only student pairs A2 / B2 to A6 / B6 were recorded. Subsequently, data collected from student pair A1 & B1 during the first combined class was excluded from this study.

To ensure consistency in the data, all students (including the six student pairs) were assigned the same partners in both the pre- and post-training combined classes. It may be worth noting

that the two combined classes involving recorded interactions during PAL activities did not share the same theme, with the first being “discrimination” and the second “past and future dreams.” The authors contend that the difference in themes had no significant bearing on their findings, since the focus of this study was not the frequency of non-understandings, but the responses by students to non-understandings.

***PAL comprehension activities.*** PAL comprehension activities were the source of dialogic speech for data collection in the study. This interactive component enabled the authors to transform LC into a more authentic dialogic speech event.

Videos containing monologic speech about discrimination and past and future dreams by ELF users from Ethiopia, Holland, and Venezuela and a native English user from South Africa were transcribed and used for the PAL component in the combined classes. The videos come from the website *7 billion Others* ([www.7billionothers.org](http://www.7billionothers.org)).

**Post-project written reflections.** The third source of data was students’ written reflections. A form containing several questions, which students could answer in English or Japanese, was handed out at the end of the final joint session. The questions asked students whether their communication skills had improved and in what ways. Students were also asked to write their overall reflections on the improvement of their own CSs.

## **Results and Findings**

### **Pre- and Post-Practice Student Questionnaire**

From the averages of the pre- and post-practice questionnaire responses, there is an overall increase in students’ perceived ability to use the CSs effectively after receiving CS instruction (see Table 1). Prior to the explicit teaching of the CSs, students identified CS A (asking for confirmation, 3.08), D (asking for clarification of meaning on a sentence-level, 3.04), E (paraphrasing, 2.44), and G (overall use of the strategies together, 2.54) as the items they are least effective in using. From the post-data, the greatest differences between pre- and post-average percentages in students’ perceived ability to use the CSs effectively occurred with CS D (asking for clarification of meaning on a sentence-level, 20%), E (paraphrasing, 20.6%), F (using body language, 19.4%), and G (overall use of the strategies together, 20%). An average response of 4.13 (out of 5) reveals that students perceived they can use CS F the most effectively.

Upon closer inspection, the data on students’ belief that they can use all the strategies together reveals there was a relatively large number of students (23) who either strongly disagreed or disagreed they were effective in using CS G initially. There was also a similar number of students who gave a neutral response. In the post-practice results, the majority of students (24) agreed or strongly agreed with the same item. This shift suggests that most of the participants’ confidence in using CSs increased.

**Table 1**  
**Results of Student Questionnaire for Pre and Post CS Training**

Communication Strategy	<i>n</i>	Pre / Post Practice	SD	D	N	A	SA	Avg	Avg Percent	Pre / Post Practice Difference
A. I can ask for confirmation effectively.	50	Pre Post	- 1	8 6	32 15	8 26	2 2	3.08 3.44	61.6% 68.8%	7.2%
B. I can ask for repetition effectively.	50	Pre Post	- -	5 3	30 9	11 27	4 11	3.28 3.92	65.6% 78.4%	12.8%
C. I can ask for confirmation of word meaning effectively.	47	Pre Post	- -	5 -	26 17	12 20	4 10	3.32 3.85	66.4% 77%	10.6%
D. I can ask for clarification of sentence meaning effectively.	48	Pre Post	- -	11 1	27 12	7 19	3 16	3.04 4.04	60.8% 80.8%	20%
E. I can use paraphrasing effectively.	43	Pre Post	1 1	25 4	15 17	1 16	1 5	2.44 3.47	48.8% 69.4%	20.6%
F. I can use body language effectively.	45	Pre Post	1 -	9 1	19 8	14 20	2 16	3.16 4.13	63.2% 82.6%	19.4%
G. I can use all of the strategies together effectively.	46	Pre Post	3 -	20 3	18 19	5 20	- 4	2.54 3.54	50.8% 70.8%	20%

*Note.* SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree. Only data from students who responded to the items in both the pre and post practice sections of the questionnaire appear in the results above.

### Analysis of Recordings and Transcriptions of Dialogic Speech

The sets of transcriptions for two pair-groups are provided in Appendix C. The first transcriptions (1.1 and 2.1) were recorded prior to the teaching of CSs and the second transcriptions (1.2 and 2.2) were recorded after all of the CS training sessions were done.

Transcription 1.1 shows a conversation between two ELF-202 students (A4 and B4) from different classes prior to the explicit teaching of CSs and PAL comprehension activity practice. It immediately represents how unsuccessful the communication was due a lack of competence in CS use by both the speaker and the listener. Student B4 used silence while smiling, a type of non-verbal communication, which is an acceptable response for expressing non-understanding in Japan but could be interpreted differently across cultures. Student A4 ended the communication by simply showing the answer on the paper.

The same pair of students met after completing all of the CS training sessions. In Transcription 1.2, there was notable improvement. For example, Student B4 immediately used a gesture to stop Student A4 in a timely manner and also used a clarification strategy by repeating a word Student B4 did not understand. Both students still need more practice to be able to ask for clarification in full questions such as "What does nightmare mean?" However, this data shows that Student B4 started using CS strategies early in the conversation rather than being silent and giving up on the activity.

The second set of transcriptions shows overall improvement in two ELF-202 students' use of strategies to continue their conversation. Transcription 2.1 shows that Student A2 asked a question and Student B2 smiled, indicating the student did not know what to answer. This is the same type of reaction seen in Transcription 1.1. Transcription 2.1 shows ineffective communication similar to that of the first pair. However, Transcription 2.2 demonstrates the pair's clear progress in conveying messages to each other. Student B2 immediately stopped

Student A2's speech to ask for the meaning of a word. Student A2 replied by using a paraphrasing strategy, stating the meaning in different words. The students continued to show improvement in communication using CSs. Importantly, Student B2 was able to formulate full sentences when asking for clarification and repetition during PAL comprehension activities following the CS training sessions.

### **Student Reflections**

In reference to the third research question, the majority of students' written reflections (see Appendix D) indicate this project had a positive influence on their communication skills. Some concerns, however, were also raised. Reflection 7 states that combining students of mixed levels from different departments was a demotivating factor due to a perceived lack of participation and ability of some non-Education Department students.

Two of the students' written reflections excerpted below (Reflections 1 and 2) were originally written in Japanese and translated into English by one of the authors, a native Japanese speaker, and then checked by another native Japanese speaker. The first comment shows a positive attitude to the CS training methodology.

Through the CS lessons, I could learn the phrases I can use in a daily conversation. I know these English expressions but I can't say them instantly, so this was a good opportunity. (Reflection 1)

The authors' interpretation is that before the project, this student felt more practice was needed to be able to use CSs effectively. However, through this project, the student learned how to use these expressions to continue the conversation.

Reflections 2 and 3 suggest the students recognize that instead of strict adherence to native English norms, intelligibility is of primary importance.

I am poor at conveying what I am thinking, but through these lessons, I learned that I should respond even if the response is not perfect rather than remain silent. (Reflection 2)

Yes, I think that my communication skills have improved. Because I couldn't explain well in English, but I was able to tell and to understand. I felt that to repeatedly listen is important. (Reflection 3)

The comments are reflective of ELF-informed thinking, and raising learner awareness of such concepts is one of the main aims of the CELF.

Reflection 4 relates to the intercultural component of the third research question by highlighting a difference (as viewed by the student) between Japanese and English-speaking culture.

It came to be conveyed that I expressed what I wanted to say using gesture . . . and I devised it so that a partner understood it. . . The Japanese rarely gave a gesture to a conversation. However, I learned when the gesture was very effective! (Reflection 4)

The student realized the importance of using gestures (CS F) when communicating in ELF settings and observed that, even though Japanese rarely use gestures, trying to explain with

gestures enhanced communication skills. Hence, the ELF-informed intercultural framework used in this study had a positive influence on the student.

### Discussion

This study investigated, from an ELF perspective, the importance of teaching CSs and creating opportunities for students to use them in ELF-like situations through PAL activities to develop their ability to negotiate meaning and overcome non-understanding when it occurs. From the student questionnaire, a significant outcome can be observed, with over half of the CSs (D, E, F, G) resulting in a 20 percent or more increase in students' perceived ability to use CSs effectively following the training sessions. Students became aware of the importance of using CSs, and they made efforts to use them appropriately during PAL activities.

The transcriptions and reflections demonstrate other ways in which students' communication skills improved. Students' realization that silence is an ineffective (pragmatic) strategy (Reflection 2), despite its general acceptance in Japan (Harumi, 1999) and that body language can enhance communication (Reflection 4), even though (according to the student) Japanese rarely use gestures, suggest a heightened student awareness of "general rules of communication that underlie particular realizations in different countries and cultures" (Wen, 2012, p. 375).

There are some limitations in this research worth noting. First, the study was conducted over a relatively short period. Thus, longitudinal research together with more quantitative data to support the authors' claims should be presented. The Likert-type scale questionnaire is another potential limitation. Since students were asked to respond to an individual item at the end of each training session, the timing may have influenced their responses. A lack of familiarity during the initial sessions may have had an adverse effect students' confidence and limited their ability to use the CSs effectively. This may account for the lower post-treatment questionnaire responses observed for CSs A, B, and C. Similarly, unfamiliarity with the PAL activities in the first combined class may have reduced students' ability to use CSs effectively. Moreover, as previously noted, the combining of different class levels and departments may have had an adverse effect on some students' performance. Lastly, because the study was conducted in a structured classroom (i.e., non-authentic) environment, positive outcomes observed in this study may not necessarily translate to students' *actual* ability to use CSs effectively in real-world, ELF or otherwise, situations.

Interestingly, written reflections from students such as "I learn about pronunciation . . ." (Reflection 11), "I was able to be conscious of the pronunciation, too" (Reflection 12), and "I felt ashamed that I have bad pronunciation" (Reflection 3) show that even though pronunciation was not one of the objectives in this study, this linguistic element was naturally realized by some participants. Future research into the relationship between pronunciation and explicit CS training could be a worthwhile pursuit for ELF-informed pedagogy. Further research of integrating CSs in ELF-informed curricula to observe quantitative and longitudinal data should also be pursued.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the data show that explicit teaching of CSs and PAL in an ELF-informed curriculum can be beneficial for students. In students' reflections, they expressed a lack of confidence in communicating in English before the CS training sessions. However, during PAL activities, their confidence showed improvement at the end of the project. This gain is further evidenced by students' ability to overcome non-understanding in a timely manner during PAL

activities following the CS training sessions. Finally, based on all the above, the authors posit that, through this project, students learned the effectiveness of using CSs.

As Smit (2010) stated, ELF is a “more immediate mode of exchange, with each participant relying directly and immediately on the other one’s contribution” (p. 57), so it is crucial for ELF learners to focus on learning CSs to successfully partake in dialogue. This needs to be taught explicitly by teachers and practiced by students in class using PAL comprehension activities. In the absence of such practice, students may fail to recognize the importance of CSs and assume that, unless they adhere strictly to native English norms, they cannot become effective communicators in English. The authors contend it is up to individual programs to change students’ perspectives on language learning for ELF competence.

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**Appendix A**  
**Pre- and Post-Practice Questionnaire**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student No: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## Communication Strategies (CSs): Step-by-Step

Just as a life preserver helps you survive in deep water by keeping you afloat, communication strategies (CSs) enable you to communicate more effectively and stay afloat when you encounter English that is over your head.

1) Below is a list of CSC (A-F) that you will practice in your ELF class.

**A: Asking for confirmation**

(words / numbers)  
単語と数の確認をとる

**B: Asking for Repetition**

もう一度聞きなおす

**C: Asking for confirmation**

(word-meaning)  
単語の意味を聞く

**D: Asking for clarification**

(sentence-meaning)  
文の意味を確認する

**E: Using Paraphrasing**


違う言い方で聞き直す・言い直す

**F: Using Body Language**

ジェスチャー・表情を使う

2) Use the questionnaire below to record your a) pre-practice ability, b) scores, and c) post-practice ability to use CSs.

- Scale:**
- 1 = Strongly disagree まったく思わない;
  - 2 = Disagree そう思わない;
  - 3 = Neutral どちらとも言えない;
  - 4 = Agree そう思う;
  - 5 = Strongly agree 大いに思う

 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES	Pre-Practice 2015年12月9日	Practice: Score(s)	*Post-Practice
<b>A.</b> I can ask for confirmation effectively. 単語と数を上手く確認できる。	1 2 3 4 5	_____/20	1 2 3 4 5
*Reflections/Comments: _____ _____			
<b>B.</b> I can ask for repetition effectively. もう一度聞きなおすことができる。	1 2 3 4 5	_____/20	1 2 3 4 5
*Reflections/Comments: _____ _____			


<b>C. I can ask for confirmation of word meaning effectively.</b> 単語の意味を聞くことができる。	1 2 3 4 5	_____/10	1 2 3 4 5	
*Reflections/Comments:				
<b>D. I can ask for clarification of sentence meaning effectively.</b> 文の意味を確認することができる。	1 2 3 4 5	_____/10	1 2 3 4 5	
*Reflections/Comments:				
<b>E. I can use paraphrasing effectively.</b> 違う言い方で聞き直す・言い直すことができる。	1 2 3 4 5	_____/20	1 2 3 4 5	
*Reflections/Comments:				
<b>F. I can use body language effectively.</b> ジェスチャー・表情を使うことができる。	1 2 3 4 5	_____/20	1 2 3 4 5	
*Reflections/Comments:				
<b>G. I can use all of the strategies together effectively.</b> 全てのスキルを使うことができる。	1 2 3 4 5	_____/20	1 2 3 4 5	
*Reflections/Comments:				
		Pre-Practice Total	Practice Scores: Total	Post-Practice Total
		_____/35	_____/120	_____/35

*Note.* The Japanese translations were written by one of the authors, a native Japanese speaker, and then checked by another native Japanese speaker. Students were not required to record their practice scores (i.e., it was optional).

## Appendix B Sample of CS E Worksheets

**Communication Strategies: Step-by-step**

**DON'T FORGET TO USE PREVIOUS STRATEGIES**



**STUDENT (A)**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategy A</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Did you say [...]?</li> <li>■ Did you say [...] or [...]?</li> <li>■ Was that [...]?</li> <li>■ Was that [...] or [...]?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategy B</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sorry? / Pardon? (with rising intonation)</li> <li>■ (Sorry?) I didn't catch that.</li> <li>■ What was that (again)?</li> <li>■ I missed what you said (after.../ before...).</li> <li>■ What did you say (after.../ before...)?</li> <li>■ Can/Could you say that again (more slowly)?</li> <li>■ Can/Could you repeat that (more slowly)?</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategy C</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ (Do) you mean (wave) like/as in (wave goodbye)?</li> <li>■ (Do) you mean (wave) like/as in (wave goodbye) or (wave) like/as in (an ocean wave)?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategy D</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What does [...] mean?</li> <li>■ What do you mean by [...]?</li> <li>■ Sorry, I don't know what [...] means.</li> <li>■ What do you mean, for example?</li> <li>■ Repeat the word/sentence with rising intonation.</li> </ul>

**TODAY'S NEW STRATEGY**

**STRATEGY E: Paraphrasing (to express understanding)**

<p><b>EXAMPLES:</b></p> <p>Statement: <i>Skydiving isn't safe.</i> Paraphrase → <i>It's a dangerous sport.</i></p> <p>Statement: <i>It's a beautiful day.</i> Paraphrase → <i>The weather today is really nice.</i></p> <p>Statement: <i>Japan isn't as big as America.</i> Paraphrase → <i>The U.S. is larger than Japan.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>POINTS SYSTEM</b></p> <p>○ = <b>Many</b> (or all) different words are used. (= 2 points)</p> <p>△ = <b>Some</b> different words are used. (= 1 point)</p> <p>× = <b>One</b> (or no) different words are used (= 0 points)</p> <p><b>Example Dialogue:</b></p> <p>A: <i>Skydiving isn't safe.</i></p> <p>○ B: That's right. <i>It's a dangerous sport.</i> (= 2 points)</p> <p>△ B: I think skydiving <u>is dangerous</u>, too. (= 1 point)</p> <p>× B: I agree. <i>It isn't safe.</i> (= 0 points)</p> <p>A: <i>It's a beautiful day.</i></p>
--	---

**Practice Using Paraphrasing (to express understanding)**

A) Read the **5 STATEMENTS** below to your partner. After each one, your partner should paraphrase the statement you read. **LISTEN** and use the symbols (○△×) next to each statement to check your partner's paraphrasing. **Do NOT stop unless your partner uses communication strategies.**

1. Shopping in Ginza isn't cheap. → Student B's score: ○ △ ×
2. Kanji isn't easy to learn. → Student B's score: ○ △ ×
3. Pizza tastes really good. → Student B's score: ○ △ ×
4. Natto is good for your body. → Student B's score: ○ △ ×
5. Disneyland is very crowded during the winter holidays. → Student B's score: ○ △ ×

\*\*After you finish all the statements, tell your partner his or her points for each paraphrase.\*\*

---

B) Your partner will say **5 STATEMENTS**. Listen and **PARAPHRASE** after each statement. **Your partner will NOT stop unless you use communication strategies.**

\*\*When you finish, ask your partner your score for each paraphrase. Use the symbols below.\*\*

1. ○ △ ×	2. ○ △ ×	3. ○ △ ×	4. ○ △ ×	5. ○ △ ×
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

Write your score. (2, 1, or 0 points for each paraphrase) My score WITH CSs: \_\_\_\_\_/10

Dimoski, Yujobo, and Imai - Page 80

**STRATEGY E: Paraphrasing (to clarify meaning)**

**EXAMPLES:**

- What I mean is (...).
- What I'm saying is (...).
- In other words, (...).
- For example, (...).

**EXAMPLE DIALOGUE:**

A: Did you know that *Americans in Japan frequently find themselves being asked questions on topics they consider to be private?*

B: ...? ...? ...?

A: Do you know what I mean?

B: Sorry, no I don't.

A: **What I mean is** *Americans think that Japanese people ask too many personal questions.*

B: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

\*Excerpt from "Ugly Japanese, Ugly Americans" by Min Byoung-chu & Nevitt Reagan (1994, p. 45)

**Practice Using Paraphrasing (to clarify meaning)**

A. Read the text below about cultural differences between America and Japan.

*Did you know that Japanese people think it is strange when Americans...*

***\*Brag about themselves.***

"In the U.S., one is expected to promote one's own accomplishments, to "blow one's own horn." To Japanese, who prefer a more self-effacing and humble approach, this seems very arrogant.

\*Excerpt from "Ugly Japanese, Ugly Americans" by Min Byoung-chu & Nevitt Reagan (1994, p. 120)

B. Look at the questions below. You will answer them AFTER you finish section D.

1. What do Japanese people dislike about the way Americans communicate?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why do Japanese people dislike it?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why do American people communicate that way?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How do Japanese people prefer to communicate?

\_\_\_\_\_

**C. EXAMPLE DIALOGUE**

A) Did you know that Japanese people don't like it when Americans brag about themselves?

B) What do you mean, "they brag about themselves"?

A) **What I'm saying is,** "Americans like to talk about themselves."

B) Oh, I see. Thank you. (Student B WRITES → "Americans like to talk about themselves.")  
You don't have to write every word.

D. Now practice with Student B.

1. **1<sup>st</sup> READ** Statement: "In America, one is expected to promote one's own accomplishments.  
**2<sup>nd</sup> WAIT** for Student B's response.  
**3<sup>rd</sup> READ** Paraphrase: What I'm saying is → it is normal in America for people to talk about their successes.

2. **1<sup>st</sup> LISTEN** to Student B read a statement:  
**2<sup>nd</sup> ASK** Student B: → What do you mean by "to blow one's own horn"?  
**3<sup>rd</sup> WRITE** Student B's paraphrase below:

→ \_\_\_\_\_  
*You don't have to write every word.*

3. **1<sup>st</sup> READ** Statement: "Japanese prefer a more self-effacing and humble approach.  
**2<sup>nd</sup> WAIT** for Student B's response.  
**3<sup>rd</sup> READ** Paraphrase: For example, I mean → Japanese like a more quiet and simple (or shy) communication style.

4. **1<sup>st</sup> LISTEN** to Student B read a statement:  
**2<sup>nd</sup> ASK** Student B: → What does "this seems very arrogant" mean?  
**3<sup>rd</sup> WRITE** Student B's paraphrase below:

→ \_\_\_\_\_  
*You don't have to write every word.*

\*Excerpts from "Ugly Japanese, Ugly Americans" by Min Byoung-chu & Nevitt Reagan (1994, p. 120)

E. Now go back to SECTION B (above) and ANSWER the 4 questions.

Write your score. (1point for each correct answer)



My score WITH CSs: \_\_\_\_\_/4

**More Practice Using Paraphrasing** (to clarify meaning)

- F. Read the text below about cultural differences between America and Japan. Make sure that you understand all of the content.

Did you know that Japanese people think it is strange when \*Americans drink directly from a bottle? \*Although this may be acceptable behavior in most parts of the world, in Japan it is just not the done thing. With the exception of small juice bottles from vending machines, one nearly always uses a cup or a glass for drinking.

\*Excerpts from "Ugly Japanese, Ugly Americans" by Min Byoung-chu & Nevitt Reagan (1994, p. 109)

G. Now get ready to **READ** the text below to **Student B**. **USE PARAPHRASING** (some has already been done for you) **ONLY when your partner uses communication strategies** (**OR** when you see that he or she may not understand, e.g. → **Do you know what I mean?** etc.) while you read.

**ADD** your own notes before you start if you like.

Did you know that Japanese people think it is strange when Americans **\*drink directly from a bottle?**

*drink from a bottle with your mouth*

\*Although this may be acceptable behavior in most parts of the world, in Japan it is just not the

\*done thing. With the exception of small juice bottles from vending machines, **one** nearly always

*Japanese people*

\*uses a cup or a glass for drinking.

\*Excerpt from "Ugly Japanese, Ugly Americans" by Min Byoung-chu & Nevitt Reagan (1994, p. 109)

H. Ask Student B the following questions about the above text:

1. For Japanese people, what is strange about the way Americans drink? (2 points)
2. Is it only Americans who drink that way? Give me an example. (2 points)
3. When do Japanese people drink the same way as American people do? (2 points)

Check Student B's answers. (Give him or her 2, 1, or 0 points for each answer)

I. Now, listen to Student B talk about cultural differences between America and Japan. **Your partner WILL NOT STOP unless you use communication strategies.** Student B will **ASK YOU 3 QUESTIONS** after he or she finishes reading. You can take notes below if you wish.

---

---

---

Write your score. (2, 1, or 0 points for each answer)



WITH CSs: \_\_\_\_/6

Note. This is a sample of Student A's worksheets used December 21, 2015. The content for Student B is not the same. The worksheets contain excerpts from "Ugly Japanese, Ugly Americans" by Min & Reagan (1994).

### Appendix C

#### Transcriptions for Each Pair-Group

##### Transcription 1.1

1 <A4> <READING> what was my major in university?</READING> </A4>  
2 <B4> <P: 05> <USING BODY LANGUAGE: SMILING> </B4>  
3 <A4> <SHOWING B4 THE ANSWER ON THE WORKSHEET> </A4>  
4 <B4> <READING> engineering</READING> </B4>  
5 <A4> <USING BODY LANGUAGE: NODDING> <READING> what country did  
6 I go to university?</READING> </A4>  
7 <B4> <USING BODY LANGUAGE: STRESSFUL LOOK> <LOOKING AT A4's  
8 WORKSHEET> <READING>(vene), (zu), (ela)</READING> </B4>  
9 <A4> <A4> okay </A4> <READING> how well was I qualified for the jobs that I  
10 applied for?</READING> </A4>  
11 <B4> <LOOKING AT A4's WORKSHEET> <READING> she fit  
12 perfectly</READING> </B4>  
13 <A4> <USING BODY LANGUAGE: NODDING> @@</A4>  
14 <B4> @@ </B4>

##### Transcription 1.2

1 <A4> <READING> I had many nightmares many nightmares I probably  
2 was</READING> </A4>  
3 <B4> nightmares? <ASKING FOR CLARIFICATION> <USING BODY  
4 LANGUAGE: HAND GESTURE FOR STOP> </B4>  
5 <A4> <FOREIGN> (xx) <EXPLAINING IN JAPANESE> </FOREIGN> </A4>  
6 <B4> nightmares <EXPRESSING UNDERSTANDING> </B4>  
7 <A4> <READING> and something very early of being I'm afraid to say it  
8 a little bit of a messiah</READING> </A4>  
9 <B4> messiah? <ASKING FOR CLARIFICATION> <USING BODY  
10 LANGUAGE: TILTING HEAD TO EXPRESS NON-UNDERSTANDING>  
11 </B4>

##### Transcription 2.1

1 <A2> <READING> I fit perfectly the description of what they were looking for and  
2 when I went to turn in my application they told me they were not looking for a  
3 female</READING> </A2>  
4 <B2> <USING BODY LANGUAGE: LOOKING DOWN AT HIS/HER  
5 WORKSHEET> </B2>  
6 <A2> question</READING> what was my major in university?</READING> </A2>  
7 <B2> <P: 10> <FOREIGN> (wakannai) </FOREIGN> <USING BODY LANGUAGE:  
8 SMILING> </B2>  
9 <A2> <FOREIGN> (ah, jyaa) </FOREIGN> next</READING> in which country did  
10 I go to university?</READING> </A2>  
11 <B2> (vene), venezuela</B2>  
12 <A2> <A2> okay </A2> <READING> how well was I qualified for the jobs I  
13 (apleed), applied for?</READING> </A2>  
14 <B2> . I don't know <BODY LANGUAGE: SMILING> </B2>

## Transcription 2.2

1 <A2> <READING> I have many nightmares many nightmares</READING> </A2>  
2 <B2> nightmare?, nightmare? [ASKING FOR CONFIRMATION: WORD-  
3 MEANING]</B2>  
4 <A2> yeah, bad dream, bad dream <PARAPHRASING> </A2>  
5 <B2> bad dream, bad dream <REPEATING: EXPRESSING  
6 UNDERSTANDING> </B2>  
7 <A2> <READING> I probably was very depressed</READING> </A2>  
8 <B2> depressed? <ASKING FOR CONFIRMATION: WORD-MEANING>  
9 </B2>  
10 <A2> depressed <REPEATING> </A2>  
11 <B2> What do you mean? <ASKING FOR CLARIFICATION: SENTENCE-  
12 MEANING> </B2>  
13 <A2> <P: 05> <USING BODY LANGUAGE: EXPRESSING SAD EMOTION>  
14 </A2>  
15 <B2> <B2> okay, okay, okay </B2> depressed <EXPRESSING  
16 UNDERSTANDING> </B2>  
17 <A2> <READING> but my dream was very normal to be the moon to be on the  
18 moon</READING> </A2>  
19 <B2> sorry sorry sorry, could you repeat more slowly, could more slowly?  
20 <ASKING FOR REPETITION> </B2>

Note. ELFA Transcription Guide. <http://www.helsinki.fi/englanti/elfa/ELFA%20transcription%20guide.pdf>

## Appendix D

### Sample of Student Reflections

#### Instructions

Reflect on your experience of the three joint lessons. Do you think your communication skills have improved? What kind of improvement and why are strategies helpful for ELF students?

#### Reflection 1\*

Through these joint lessons, I learned pronunciation of different teachers and teaching method. I learned a lot from working with students from other classes. Through the CS lessons, I could learn the phrases I can use in a daily conversation. I know these English expressions but I can't say them instantly, so this was a good opportunity. It was also a good opportunity to listen to non-native English speakers through the videos. It was a good learning opportunity. I learned so many expressions so I hope I will have opportunity to use them in the future.

#### Reflection 2\*

I don't hate English, but I cannot say that I am good at it. Even if I can read and listen English, I am poor at conveying what I am thinking, but through these lessons, I learned that I should respond even if the response is not perfect, rather than remain silent. After entering university, I spent more time on other subjects so I am losing my English. Even during this spring semester, I'll try to study English every day. Thank you.

#### Reflection 3

I realized how important command of English is. Because I partnered intelligent girl. I am one year her senior, but I'm not as smart as her. She is good pronunciation. I felt ashamed that I have bad pronunciation. So I was helped by strategies. Yes, I think that my communication skills have improved. Because I couldn't explain well in English, but I was able to tell and to understand. I felt that to repeatedly listen is important. We haven't gotten quite use to English. So we can't to use English well. But if we used the strategies, we could tell our opinions. To use the strategies help our communication.

#### Reflection 4

I think that I was able to improve a communication skills. I was better at the communication than the reading and writing. It was possible with a fresh feeling by always doing it with a different person. And, I was able to get joy and sense of accomplishment when I got communication. In addition, I was able to have confidence toward a communication skill by this class more. It came to be conveyed that I expressed what I wanted to say using gesture. While BooBoo means that I told, this performs a gesture. And, I devised it so that a partner understood it. In addition, I think that I watched the reaction of the partner well to be important. The Japanese rarely gave a gesture to a conversation. However, I learned when the gesture was very effective! This class had a good experience for me very much! It was from a textbook and was able to learn that I could not learn. I make use of the skills that I learned and want to take the communication from now on.

#### Reflection 5

I felt that communication skills very important. It was good to be able to talk with many students. The first is a tense. Because it is a matter weak point to talk. I want to be able to speak more English. I want to study English very harder about reading, writing and listening. My partner cooperate. So, I was saved very much. Three joint lesson are very difficult. but I think I have a power. I used a gesture, changed an expression and exerted myself. I am glad to have special classes. I wanted to study more in three joint lesson. I want to do my best to talk better.

**Reflection 6**

I think that a communication skill is very important. I was able to confirm importance by doing this joint class. There is different how to convey even if I do not understand English. I speak a word to understand and use the gesture hand gesture and ask you again. An effort to understand is necessary. Power to hear is not enough to us. I think that you must not give it up immediately. A communication skill is not only to talk. I say the technique of associating with person. I communicated with many people by this class. I had a lot of fun! Thank you.

**Reflection 7\***

Other two classes' level and motivation to learn was low and I was at a loss. For example, during the teacher's explanation or during the activity, they were chatting the entire time. My partner wasn't able to recall any of the vocabulary, so I couldn't improve myself. I think this joint style should not be selected and if it were to be done, it should only be with Education department students.

**Reflection 8\***

I didn't know what to ask when I didn't understand the speaker, but now I know how to ask questions, and I can continue conversations. I think it is necessary to communicate in English. Even at my part-time job, there are many foreign customers coming so I think Japan is becoming more globalized. It was a good opportunity to improve my English skills.

**Reflection 9\***

Until high school, most classes were lecture style, and we didn't even do listening practice. ELF classes are new because we focus on more practical things like communication and presentations. By thinking about the strategies to make myself understood, I have started using more gestures than before I took this class.

**Reflection 10\***

It was fun. I couldn't continue conversation before, but after I learned these communication strategies, I felt that I could continue talking. Compared to before the lessons, I feel the communication is going well.

**Reflection 11**

Communicative competence improved by performing three times of joint classes. Especially, I feel talking skills. Because, I learn about pronunciation and body language. Furthermore, I takes with a stranger. It was nervous. But it was good experience. The 3 joint lessons are very difficult. But I could know my bad point and my communication skills improved. The 3 joint lessons and ELF class was good for me. I think that I want to make use of this learning in the future.

**Reflection 12**

I think that my communication skills have improved thanks to the 3 joint lessons. My English is poor, but I was able to know that I could convey that I wanted to talk by various means. In addition, I was able to be conscious of the pronunciation, too. In particular, body language is the usefulest for me. Because, I convey that I want to say without a sentence. I really want to use body language. Because, ELF students were able to know English except the sentence.

*Note.* Reflections 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10 were written by the students in Japanese and translated by one of the authors, a native Japanese speaker, into English and then checked by another native Japanese speaker.

# English Through Culturally Familiar Contexts: A Pilot Study in Japan

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As more attention is given to the subject of global Englishes, consideration of the different methods by which English is taught has become more important. Across Asia, increasingly teachers have turned to culturally specific textbook design, yet few scholars have conducted studies that demonstrate the practical effectiveness of such texts in Asian contexts. To bridge this research gap, we conducted a study wherein students in two English reading classes at a Japanese university were given the same readings, with passages reflecting either Japanese or foreign cultural contexts. Through pre- and post-lesson tests, we gauged the effectiveness of culturally familiar proper nouns on vocabulary recall and content comprehension. Overall, we demonstrate that culturally familiar contexts in EFL study might have a positive impact on language learning for students.

As English receives attention as a global language, the question of culture in language education becomes more prominent. Much of this attention has been given to the distinction between teaching English as a foreign or global language (EFL) and teaching English as a second language (ESL). Broadly, an ESL course is an English language course taught to a non-native speaker in a country where English is the dominant language. The goal of ESL instruction is cultural and linguistic assimilation. In contrast, an EFL course is an English language class in a country where the dominant language is not English. The goal of EFL instruction is to teach English as a means for communication with the world, rather than assimilation. As English becomes a global language, there has been a shift toward EFL in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Leung & Dewey, 2010) and a move toward the incorporation of L1 vocabulary and contexts into the L2 classroom (Cook, 2001; Nation, 1997; Tavakoli, Shirinbakhsh, & Rezazadeh, 2013; Timor, 2012). However, little attention has been given to the effectiveness of culturally familiar contexts in EFL education in Asia. This paper presents findings from a pilot study on the impact of culturally familiar and unfamiliar contexts on students' vocabulary and content recall across two English proficiency levels in a Japanese university. It discusses the implications of the preliminary results and quantitatively demonstrates the benefits of cultural familiarity in EFL course content.

In our research, we use the term *context* to refer to the culturally specific knowledge the readers bring to the text, as discussed by scholars of schema theory (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Stott, 2001). Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) hypothesized that “New information, new concepts, new ideas can have meaning only when they can be related to something the individual already knows” (p. 553). They further posited that “The background knowledge that second language learners bring to the text is often culture-specific” (p. 562). We draw on the schema theory and the previously mentioned studies to argue for the importance of culturally familiar contexts in EFL education.

## Literature Review

### The Instruction of English and Local Culture

Many textbook activities require not only knowledge of the English language, but also of Western culture. Yet today, more students learn not with the objective of living abroad but with the goal of English competence for employment within their own country (Crystal, 2003; McKenzie, 2010). For students who may have minimal interest in or knowledge of Western culture, struggles with foreign cultural contexts can present an additional roadblock to language acquisition. Many textbooks for a global market use western names and places; yet even proper nouns can pose challenges to students learning a foreign language (Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Ketchum, 2006).

For this reason, scholars are giving increasing attention to the retention of local cultural identity in language education (Mizumura, 2015; Pennycook, 1994, 2001; Tanaka, 2015). Drawing on work by scholars who argue for the place of L1 in the L2 classroom (Cook, 2001; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Nation, 1997; Timor, 2012), studies have used the cultural schema theory to argue for the place of cultural adaptation in EFL courses, in particular in Middle Eastern contexts (Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Keshavarz, Atai, & Ahmadi, 2007; Tavakoli et al., 2013). In Asian countries, there is a shift towards culturally familiar textbook design, as can be seen in Cambodia (Gentner, 2015). It is clear that as English becomes a common global language, a reconsideration of the way in which English is taught is necessary.

### Culturally Familiar Contexts in the EFL Classroom

There has been some research into the pedagogical effectiveness of culturally familiar contexts in ELT. Drawing on Steffensen, Joag-Dev, and Anderson (1979), a number of educators and researchers have argued that the retention of L1 cultural contexts is an important scaffolding strategy in L2 education. Alptekin (2006) referred to this pedagogical tactic as *nativization*, which he defined as the “sociological, semantic and pragmatic adaptation of the textual and contextual cues of the original story into the learner’s own culture, while keeping its linguistic and rhetorical content essentially intact” (p. 497).

Further studies around the Middle East, Turkey, and Spain indicate the relevance of learner-centered pedagogy rooted in culturally familiar texts and contexts (Demir, 2012; Erten & Razi, 2009; Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Kuhl, Asl, & Yavari, 2013; Pulido, 2004). Demir (2012) conducted a study wherein groups of 7th grade students in Turkey were given nativized and what he refers to as “denativized” or “authentic” texts with the “name of the cities, countries, events, and dates” reflecting either Turkish or foreign contexts (p. 191). His study demonstrated that students who read the culturally familiar version of the text scored higher in reading comprehension and vocabulary recall. Culturally familiar contexts in texts have been shown to increase comprehension (Alptekin, 2006; Erten & Razi, 2009; Tavakoli et al., 2013) and vocabulary retention (Pulido, 2004).

While nativization has been gaining ground in Middle Eastern pedagogical practices in particular, it has received comparatively less attention in East Asia. At the same time, studies into culturally familiar texts and EFL education in Japan echo the results above: Chihara, Sakurai, and Oller (1989) and Sasaki (2000) demonstrated that students who read culturally familiar texts had measurably better vocabulary scores and improved reading comprehension. The results of these studies support the hypothesis that nativized texts and original texts yield clear benefits to language learners.

However, the above studies do have some weaknesses. Demir (2012) went beyond altering proper nouns by changing historical and cultural contexts together with the national holiday (Independence Day in the United States or Turkey) in his reading selection, making a direct comparison of student responses to the piece more difficult. Furthermore, these studies have tended to focus on single classes with a uniform level of proficiency.

Our pilot study investigates the impacts of familiar and unfamiliar cultural contexts in vocabulary recall and content comprehension in Japan, beginning from the hypothesis that familiar cultural contexts promote both vocabulary recall and comprehension. The study was conducted across proficiency levels, a dimension that the studies above have not considered.

## Methodology

### Participants

Our study had 41 participants (28 females, 13 males) enrolled at a small, private university in western Japan. They were aged 18 to 24. All students were enrolled in yearlong intermediate or advanced level English courses that used current events and newspaper stories in their classes. Two of the authors taught the two classes in this study.

Prior to our study, we administered the New General Service List Test (NGSLT; Stoeckel & Bennett, 2015) to our participants to gauge their initial vocabulary level. The NGSLT was used because it effectively covers the first several thousand words of English that make up ninety percent of the core of everyday language used in reading, listening, and speaking (Browne, Culligan, & Phillips, 2013). Each of the five approximately 560-word bands of the New General Service List contributes 20 items to the NGSLT, making a total of 100 items. The NGSLT results, mean TOEIC scores, and details of the two classes in this study are given in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
***Class Data***

Class 1	Class 2
22 participants (16 females, six males)	19 participants (12 females, seven males)
1st year students	2nd, 3rd, and 4th year students
TOEIC: 300 or above	TOEIC: 400 or above
NGSLT class average: 65.7%	NGSLT class average: 78.7%

### Research Design

The design of the study was comparative with two groups. After the NGSLT, the instructors gave two sets of paired reading assignments out of thirteen readings per semester. The assignments were from newspaper stories that instructors either chose from familiar cultural contexts or altered to either reflect culturally familiar or unfamiliar contexts. Of the four articles, two were from a Japanese newspaper: “Man made living by selling stolen golf balls” (“Man made living,” 2007) and “Checking attendance by mobile phone” (Mizutani & Mizutani, 2007,

p. 133); one from a British newspaper: “Out of love for his cats” (“Cat burglar,” 2013); and one from a Singaporean newspaper: “Man charged \$3,000 for punching queue-jumper in the eye in MRT train” (Chong, 2015). We chose newspapers as a source of authentic language usage (see also Demir, 2012; Tanaka, 2015).

For the first and second articles, one class received the original culturally familiar context version while the other class received an article that was identical apart from proper nouns or monetary denominations altered to reflect foreign cultural contexts. For the third and fourth articles, both classes received the same foreign or familiar context version to set a control group for the study. Table 2 gives details on how the readings were assigned to each class.

**Table 2**  
***The Class Readings***

Article	Class 1	Class 2
	Cultural Context	Cultural Context
Man made living by selling stolen golf balls	Foreign (Arabic)	Japanese
Checking attendance by mobile phone	Japanese	Foreign (Arabic)
Out of love for his cats	Foreign (Kenyan)	Foreign (Kenyan)
Man charged \$3,000 for punching queue-jumper in the eye in MRT train	Japanese	Japanese

The third article, with a culturally familiar context, was changed to have a foreign context and the opposite was done for the fourth article to test a perceived bias in student discussion and homework answers. Arabic and Kenyan contexts were specifically chosen as the foreign contexts to avoid western culture, which many students have some familiarity with through popular culture. Each article was assigned as a homework reading. Prior to reading the article, each class was given an identical pretest at the end of class. Students were then given either the culturally familiar or unfamiliar article and identical homework assignments. After study and class discussion in the next meeting, both groups were given the same posttest. Although four articles were used in class, due to space limitations, this paper introduces the tests, articles, and homework through examples from one article in particular.

**Example Article Used as a Research Instrument**

“Man Made Living by Selling Stolen Golf Balls” appeared in *Japan News* (2007) and included names and currency given in Japanese cultural contexts. The original article was given to students in Class 2. The article was altered to take place in an Arabic cultural context for Class 1. Table 3 shows excerpts of the article; the text was not bolded or italicized in the articles given to students. We added two paragraphs to promote classroom discussion by introducing moral ambiguity and to slightly increase the length of the articles.

**Table 3**  
**The Difference of Contexts in Article 1**

Article 1 Given to Class 1 (Foreign context)	Article 1 Given to Class 2 (Japanese context)
<p><b>Man made living by selling stolen golf balls</b></p> <p><b>ABU DHABI-</b> A man believed to have made his living over the past 15 years by selling golf balls that he took from ponds on golf courses late at night has been charged with theft, according to police.</p> <p><b>Mohammad Moftizadeh of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates,</b> was arrested on April 27 and later charged with stealing 1,376 balls, worth about 41,000 <i>dirhams</i>, from a pond at <b>Sadiyat Beach Gold Club</b> in <b>Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates</b>, the police said. . . .</p> <p>“Such theft is a crime against society,” said <b>Nassar Sarjah</b>, one of the arresting police officers. “In <b>Abu Dhabi</b>, golf is an exclusive sport. To carelessly come onto a course and disturb the ponds in search of balls harms the course. . . .”</p> <p><b>Moftizadeh</b>, on the other hand, stated that after he lost his hand in a factory accident, he had no other skills. . . . “ . . . I was careful not to hurt the course,” he said in his defense. “ . . . It was the only way I could live.”</p>	<p><b>Man made living by selling stolen golf balls</b></p> <p><b>GIFU-</b> A man believed to have made his living over the past 15 years by selling golf balls that he took from ponds on golf courses late at night has been charged with theft, according to police.</p> <p><b>Tadayoshi Kusanagi of Toyota, Aichi Prefecture,</b> was arrested on April 27 and later charged with stealing 1,376 balls, worth about ¥41,000, from a pond at <b>Gifu Kokusai Country Club</b> in <b>Yamagata, Gifu Prefecture</b>, the police said. . . .</p> <p>“Such theft is a crime against society,” said <b>Hideo Imanashi</b>, one of the arresting police officers. “In <b>Japan</b>, golf is an exclusive sport. To carelessly come onto a course and disturb the ponds in search of balls harms the course. . . .”</p> <p><b>Kusanagi</b>, on the other hand, stated that after he lost his hand in a factory accident, he had no other skills . . . . “ . . . I was careful not to hurt the course,” he said in his defense. “ . . . It was the only way I could live.”</p>

VocabProfile (Cobb, 2015), a computer program, identified the words the articles contained from each of the frequency bands as shown in Table 4. We replaced items in the articles beyond the fourth set of 1000 high frequency (K4) English words with simplified lexical items.

**Table 4**  
**Breakdown of the Lexical Items in Article 1**

Frequency level bands	Current profile (token %)	Examples of items on pretest & posttest
K1	77.13%	None
K2	8.92%	according to, search, hurt
K3	3.88%	arrest, retail, pond
K4	1.16%	theft, abandon
OFF	8.91%	None (Japanese or foreign proper nouns)

Note. K1 is the first 1000, K2 the second 1000, K3 the third 1000, and K4 the fourth 1000 most frequent English words.

To test vocabulary recall and content comprehension, we used pretests and posttests with both classes. By comparing the lexical text analysis to the student results on the NGSLT, we were able to select words that the students were less likely to know. Items were chosen from the second to fourth sets of 1000 high frequency words of English (K2-K4; see Table 4). Items from the first 1000 high frequency words were ignored because the majority of the students from both classes had achieved a near perfect score on this section of the NGSLT. Each pretest and posttest contained 15 multiple choice vocabulary questions with three distractors each and three content questions (see Table 5). The questions on the tests were identical for both classes. The lexical items for the 15 multiple choice questions were selected using VocabProfile.

**Table 5**  
**Examples of Test Questions for Article 1**

Examples of multiple choice vocabulary questions	Examples of content questions
<p><b>according to:</b> According to the newspaper, it is going to rain tomorrow.</p> <p>allowed by</p> <p>reported by</p> <p>made by</p> <p>hoped for</p> <p><b>arrest:</b> The man was arrested.</p> <p>kept after school</p> <p>questioned by the police</p> <p>taken and kept by the police</p> <p>questioned by parents</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you believe it is always wrong to steal? Why or why not?</li> <li>2. Which is more important: the needs of the individual or the needs of society?</li> <li>3. Do you believe luxury sports such as golf are important to society? Why or why not?</li> </ol>

## Results, Discussion, and Limitations

### Vocabulary Recall Through Culturally Familiar and Unfamiliar Contexts

As shown in Table 6, both classes achieved gains in their mean vocabulary scores from pretests to posttests for all four articles. However, due to participant attrition in the fall semester and the fact that the crossover design was not followed in the fall semester, only the vocabulary gains for articles read in the spring semester were analyzed.

Repeated-measure *t* tests were conducted to evaluate whether the students had made significant gains from vocabulary pretests to posttests. Table 7 shows that while both classes made vocabulary gains that would be significant with *p* values of less than .05, when the Bonferroni adjustment was applied to the critical *P* value (*P* value of 0.5 / number of tests = 0.5 / 4 = 0.0125), only 3 of the 4 test results were found to be statistically significant. Furthermore, the mean vocabulary gains of students who read articles with Japanese contexts did not exceed those who read the same articles set in foreign contexts. Thus no further analysis was necessary to determine that the results did not support the hypothesis that greater vocabulary gains would be made by students reading culturally familiar contexts versus students reading assignments with culturally unfamiliar contexts.

**Table 6**  
**Mean Score Comparisons Between Pretests and Posttests**

Semester	Article	Class	Context	Tests	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	Gains
Spring	Golf	1	Foreign	Pretest	22	10.18	Post-Pre
				Posttest	22	11.91	+1.727
		2	Japanese	Pretest	19	11.89	Post-Pre
				Posttest	19	13.42	+1.526
	Attendance	1	Japanese	Pretest	23	11.57	Post-Pre
				Posttest	23	12.35	+.783
		2	Foreign	Pretest	19	11.63	Post-Pre
				Posttest	19	12.53	+.895
Fall	Cats	1	Foreign	Pretest	13	9.62	Post-Pre
				Posttest	13	10.62	+1.000
		2	Foreign	Pretest	12	10.08	Post-Pre
				Posttest	12	11.33	+1.250
	Queue	1	Japanese	Pretest	14	10.93	Post-Pre
				Posttest	14	12.50	+1.571
		2	Japanese	Pretest	10	12.20	Post-Pre
				Posttest	10	13.60	+1.400

**Table 7**  
**Mean Score Comparisons Between Pretests and Posttests of Articles 1 & 2**

Article	Class	Tests	<i>N</i>	Min	Max	<i>Mean</i>	Gains	<i>P</i>
Golf	1	Pretest	22	6	15	10.18	Post-Pre	Pre / Post Pair
		Posttest	22	6	15	11.91	1.727	.000*
	2	Pretest	19	7	15	11.89	Post-Pre	Pre / Post Pair
		Posttest	19	10	15	13.42	1.526	.011*
Attendance	1	Pretest	23	8	15	11.57	Post-Pre	Pre / Post Pair
		Posttest	23	8	15	12.35	.783	.044
	2	Pretest	19	7	14	11.63	Post-Pre	Pre / Post Pair
		Posttest	19	10	15	12.53	.895	.004*

Note. \*mean gains are significant at  $p < .0125$

There were a few limitations which may have contributed to the lack of support of the findings in the quantitative vocabulary component of this pilot study. First, due to participant attrition and the fact that the crossover design was not followed in the fall semester, the fall semester data was excluded from this portion of the analysis. Thus, there was less opportunity to find supporting evidence. Second, only 15 items were included on the vocabulary test, which given the results, was in all likelihood too few to properly explore the differences between the two classes. This was especially evident in the lack of difficult items, which led to test-ceiling effects. For example, in Class 1, only one student out of the 22 achieved a perfect score on the Golf vocabulary pretest, whereas in Class 2, four students out of 19 did so, thus limiting potential gains for Class 2. This alone may have prevented Class 2 from achieving more substantial vocabulary gains. Third, given that the hypothesis was that a Japanese cultural context would make the text easier to comprehend and more meaningful than the same text with a foreign cultural context, thus better supporting vocabulary recall, comprehension should also have been tested quantitatively. In the content questions, we did not ask specific details

about each article, but instead designed questions to be open-ended and opinion-based to facilitate more language use. This made quantitative assessment of comprehension too difficult. For this reason, the above data is focused on vocabulary. The vocabulary test results did not provide support for our hypothesis, yet due to our limitations, further research into the use of culturally familiar contexts and their effect on vocabulary recall is warranted.

### **Analysis of Homework Answers and Posttest Content Results**

In addition to the vocabulary tests, students' homework and posttest content questions were examined to explore the difference in responses to culturally familiar and unfamiliar texts. This qualitative analysis clearly indicated students had different responses. Most importantly, their answers indicated that the way that students read differed depending on the cultural context of the article. Each class was assigned the same three questions as homework for the reading assignment (see Table 8). The results yield some interesting information about the ways in which culture impacts how students read and approach material.

**Table 8**

#### ***Homework Questions***

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Homework Questions

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1. Write three main points or events from the article.
  2. Write three open-ended discussion questions you have after reading the article.
  3. Write your opinion about the article.
- 

Regarding the homework for the first article on golf balls, the students in Class 1 who read the foreign text expressed a great diversity of opinion, and their posttest answers reinforce this. Some students argued that stealing was wrong under any circumstances, while others thought the loss of a hand and the fact that no one was using the golf balls made the theft forgivable. Finally, two students wrote in their homework that the assignment was too difficult and they did not understand enough of the article to articulate an opinion.

At the same time, the homework responses indicate the foreign setting of the article implicitly influenced the way students read and approached the denativized article. For example, Student 1 wrote, "There is a tremendous gap between the rich and the poor in the United Arab Emirates. I want to lose the gap." Student 2 stated that "In Japan, people who has handicap work hard. They are make effort always." Student 3 said, "I think, that is why there is poor country. It is the story that Japanese can't think it. Because there is a way elsewhere to make my living in Japan. So I understood that this is a national difference."

Such answers illustrate that students approach content differently when it is not culturally familiar. Students implicitly or explicitly contrasted the material they believed to be foreign with how they imagined a similar story would take place in Japan, demonstrating that texts can be read in ways that are either culturally based or culturally biased (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983).

Similarly, students in Class 2 also expressed diverse opinions, but the majority of students in Class 2 wrote that stealing the golf balls was wrong, yet the circumstances of the case made it understandable. Several students in Class 2 remarked, as did Student 3, that "the story was sad," or as Student 4 said, "this is a very sensitive story." Furthermore, several students made comments such as that of Student 5: "Japanese government should make more institutions that can help people like him. And he should have research about work and institutions too before stealing." Indeed, overall, a two-thirds majority of students in Class 2 said that while they were sorry for the man who was arrested, there must be other alternatives and theft was wrong. No

student expressed such an opinion in Class 1.

The differences in answers indicate that cultural contexts influenced the ways students read the assignment. Students in Class 1 read comparatively, contrasting what they thought happened in a foreign context with what they believed could possibly happen in Japan. Students in Class 2 responded more emotionally to the native version of the story. This suggests that students are more emotionally invested in articles about their home countries, but further research is needed.

In addition, students in Class 2 who read the golf ball article with Japanese context ranked it very highly among their thirteen total course readings at the end of semester. Student 6 liked the article because "I can understand both position the police and the suspect." Student 7 wrote "I like it because it is a problem between both parties if it is a real crime or not."

In contrast, Class 1 students who read the golf ball article set in Abu Dhabi did not rank it highly and expressed frustration with the level of difficulty. While part of this may be because of the difference in student English proficiency levels, the homework and in-class discussions made it apparent that some of the frustration with the article was a direct result of the foreign setting.

### **Directions for Future Research**

The most obvious limitations to this study concerned participant attrition and the failure to follow a crossover design throughout the course of the study. In the future, research will be conducted on compulsory classes to maintain a consistent *N* size throughout the academic year. Another limitation concerned the method for assessing comprehension. Student understanding was only assessed at the lexical level and it seemed that there were too few questions on the tests and that they were not difficult enough. Future tests will also include more difficult lexical items to cast a larger net and avoid the ceiling effect, and comprehension questions, which will include the proper nouns and will be used to test for both factual and higher order thinking using a 1 or 0 scoring system. In addition, students will be informed of the original contexts of their reading assignments after completing the unit and asked if that information changes the way they think about the article. Finally, to better quantitatively gauge student interest, students will be asked to indicate their reactions to the article on a 7-point Likert scale on the posttest.

### **Conclusions**

While our study is ongoing, our initial results suggest culturally familiar contexts in EFL instruction might have a positive impact on language learning for students. The homework answers and class discussions in particular suggest that students were more engaged with articles that had a familiar cultural base.

An important contribution of the study is our evidence that in the absence of culturally-based, familiar contexts, students may approach assignments with cultural biases, changing their way of reading and responding to the work. This affective difference in the students' ways of reading created by culturally familiar contexts or lack thereof has not been demonstrated in any previous work.

It should be noted that the present study is preliminary, with a focus on vocabulary and content in a Japanese setting. Despite its focus on a single cultural context, our initial research suggests some intriguing conclusions and avenues for further research.

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# Responsive Turns in L2 Discussion Tasks: A Conversation Analysis Perspective

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With an emphasis on the significant roles of contextualization and interaction in language learning, there has been an increasing interest in micro-analysis of language-in-use in classroom contexts. However, there have been few studies of language-in-use in learner-learner interaction in EFL contexts, especially with the focus on responsive turns, a component to achieve topic extension in interactional competence. This paper, thus, explores the responsive turns that the students in a Vietnamese context constructed in discussion tasks from a conversational analysis perspective. The data set was video-recorded discussion tasks by twelve students of pre-intermediate level of English in two English classrooms at a pedagogical university in Vietnam. The findings show four features of turn construction in the students' exchanges. The discussion contributes to the body of knowledge on student talk in classroom interaction and provides some implications for responsive turn practice in EFL contexts.

Despite the increasing need to learn authentic oral skills in EFL contexts, including those in ASEAN, there is a gap between student practice in language speaking tasks and communicative interactions outside the classroom, caused, at least in part, by failure to extend the topic (Koester, 2010). Topic extension, the way speakers develop their topic through interrelation or abruption from the information in prior turns (Galaczi, 2014; Wong & Waring, 2010), is one of the fundamentals in interactional competence by which students create coherence in discussion (Gan, Davison, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008; Young, 2008). However, little research has been directed to topic extension and the ways in which EFL students progressively co-construct and develop responsive turns to achieve this continuity during classroom interaction tasks.

With the introduction of communicative language teaching, the use of paired or group-work activities, including discussion tasks, has been promoted to elicit students' spoken language-in-use and their communicative interaction in the target language. Classroom discussion tasks with guided questions have been used to facilitate opportunities for collaboration (Harmer, 2007), a crucial feature in language acquisition (Kasper & Kim, 2015). As teacher-fronted classrooms are being gradually replaced by group work in the ASEAN region, analytic research focus needs to move to interaction among learners. However, microanalysis in students' talk during their interaction to accomplish teacher-assigned discussion tasks has been largely unaddressed.

For the above reasons, this study seeks the answer to the following research question:  
How do the students construct their responsive turns to extend the topic in L2 discussion tasks?

This study provides an insight into how EFL students in a specific English learning context design their responsive turns in discussion tasks from a conversation analysis (CA) perspective. It aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on student talk in in-class interactions in the ASEAN region and to that on English language teaching pedagogies for developing interactional competence in general and classroom interactional competence in particular. Four emerging themes in responsive turns are analysed: the repetition of lexical and structural resources between a task-guided question turn and its responsive turn; the dominant pattern of opinion-reasons in responsive turns; gaze disengagement for independent word-search; and word-search through thinking aloud in the L1 - Vietnamese.

## Literature Review

### Discussion Tasks

As a task designed for language practice in in-class speaking lessons, L2 discussion is promoted for two main purposes. First, it helps elicit students' spoken language-in-use and communicative interaction in the target language. A discussion task is considered a vehicle for achieving language outcomes because it establishes a context for students to use the target language (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Kim, 2015). Second, through this medium for learning and practising the target language in class, learning opportunities occur during students' interaction to complete the task (Gardner, 2013). In this study, a teacher-assigned L2 discussion task in EFL speaking lessons asked the students to talk about a topic or an issue. It was guided by a discursive question or a series of questions, which can be called task-guided questions, to help students elaborate on the discussion. In a discussion task, the students usually work in pairs or groups without interference from the teachers.

The majority of studies on speaking tasks, including discussion tasks in Asia, have limited their focus on the procedure to implement a task in a specific context to promote students' communication abilities (e.g., Doan, 2011; Hamciuc, 2014; Harms & Myers, 2013; Thompson & Millington, 2012). They tended to focus on techniques to enhance the students' confidence (e.g., Harms & Myers, 2013, with a round-table technique) and to increase the students' participation in a task (e.g., Aubrey, 2011; Hendryx, 2012; Le, 2007). Some studies showed that factors such as group setting or topic relevancy probably affect the students' interaction in and contribution to the tasks in class (Aubrey, 2011; Le, 2007). These studies tended to use quantitative methods or case studies with interviews and questionnaires to explore the issues. Some studies, such as Hauser (2009, 2010) and Le (2007), have started to focus on the students' performance by analysing their exchanges during the task. The focus has moved from the quantitative frequency of a linguistic feature in the exchanges (Le, 2007) to the analysis of turn-taking organization and mutual interaction in and through students' language in-use within classroom interaction. In contribution to this emerging trend, this study explores students' responsive turns in discussion tasks from a CA perspective.

### Responsive Turns in Topic Extension

From a CA perspective, talk-in-interaction is premised on an understanding of the organization of social order and turn-taking in natural spoken interaction (Seedhouse, 2004). Speakers present the contiguity of talk and lead to the interplay among participants in the sequence of successive turns (Drew, 2013). By responding to the prior turn, speakers extend the topic, which is an important practice in language education because it demonstrates the highest connection between the recipient and the speaker (Waring, 2002). Waring argued that extending the topic, as a feature of "substantive reciprocity" (p. 464), can characterise the subsequent action. As Waring affirmed, extending "involves stretching out a prior explication or assertion . . . to ensure the full development of such explication or assertion" (p. 464).

Further, Nguyen (2011) stressed that speakers need to negotiate on an ongoing topic to participate in a conversation through initiating topics or contributing to the current talk. By doing so, speakers contribute to and extend the ongoing topic. Extending the topic, therefore, develops understanding of a discussion.

In discussion tasks, students construct their responsive turns to provide answers to either the task-guided questions or the follow-up questions emerging in the exchange. Through the co-construction of meaning in responsive turns, students experience and acquire the target language. Responsive turns in L2 discussion tasks, normally the answers to the task-guided questions, contribute to the co-construction of topic extension.

### **Methodology**

The study is part of a larger research project in which the focus is on topic extension in discussion tasks in an EFL context. This study is grounded in both the research findings and methodology of CA to explore the students' responsive turns in discussion tasks in a pedagogical university in Vietnam. The participants were second-year pre-service teachers of English, between 18 and 20 years of age, whose English was at the pre-intermediate level. As English teacher trainees in an EFL context, they were required to study the knowledge domains for English language proficiency development, including the four skills of English.

The set of data was the video-recordings of L2 discussion practices among 12 participants in 10 three-hour English lessons. The recorded L2 discussions arose in the naturally occurring sequence of English lessons without any manipulation or controlled guidance by the researcher. Whenever there was a discussion task in class, the participants followed the instructions and worked with each other in pairs or in groups. As a CA-grounded study, transcribing data strictly followed the CA transcription conventions (see Appendix) to consistently capture and present the data in highly detailed transcripts (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). The analysis was data-driven without any prior theoretical assumptions. The emerging themes were then referred back to the literature for discussion.

### **Findings**

#### **Repetition of Vocabulary and Structure Between a Guided Question and Its Response**

Extract 1

Guided questions:

Where is the last place you visited on the sightseeing trip? Did you enjoy it?

What is the best place you have visited?

What is the best way to look around a city?

- 1 Tru: → {where was the last place you visited on the sightseeing ↑trip; {did you enjoy it?  
 2 {((gazes → slide)) {((gazes → Cuo))  
 3 → (0.5)  
 4 Cuo: ah (.) the last place I visited on the sightseeing ↓trip i:s (0.4) Ho ↑Chi Minh Ci↓ty.  
 5 (1.0) ah I enjoy it very ↓much.
- ....
- 12 Tru: → {what is the ↑best place you (.) have {vi↑sited.  
 13 {((looking at the slide)) {((gazes → Cuo))  
 14 → (0.6)  
 15 Cuo: {the ↑best (.)↓place I have °visited° is {(0.5) HA [GIANG, (0.4)  
 16 {((looking at the slide)) {((looking up))  
 17 Tru: [((smiles))  
 18 Cuo: because (.) because (0.3) the ↑ethnic minority there  
 19 are (0.4) <very> (0.7) friendly (0.4) and very ↓kind (0.6)
- ...
- 31 Tru: → {↑what is the best way to look around a city;  
 32 {((looking at the slide))  
 33 → (0.5)  
 34 Cuo: ah (.) I think that <the best way to look around a city>  
 35 is (0.7) go on ↑foot, or (0.6) ride a bike.

In this extract, the students use the guided questions for the task to create a series of question-answer pairs, called *adjacency pairs*, to extend the topic. In the first pair (Lines 1-5), Cuong uses partial repetition of the vocabulary and grammatical structure of the guided question (Lines 4, 5) with a turn preface *ah* to construct the responsive turn. Although it is a shared guided question, there is still a gap of 0.5 seconds (Line 3) between the questioning turn and the responding turn. In the responding turn, there is a small gap (0.4 seconds) between the repetition part and the answer. The students seem to initiate the response by adopting the lexical and structural repetition of the question to create the connection between the current response and the question and to have time to think of a response. Gaps between the question and answer, and within the responsive turn, show that the students need time to either think of an idea or retrieve vocabulary.

The pattern is repeated in the second question-answer pair (Lines 12-15). Cuong starts his response by repeating part of the question (Line 15) before nominating the best place. There is also a pause between the repetition part and the answer. Cuong tends to give the answers in full grammatical sentences. In the next part of his turn, Cuong includes an explanation to justify his selection, which is initiated by the word *because*. This pattern can also be observed in the last pair part of the adjacency pair (Lines 31-35); the repetition of vocabulary is followed by a 0.7-second gap before Cuong's choice as the main informing answer to the question.

Such lexical or structural repetition between a guided question and its response is illustrated in Figure 1.

- Turn 1: Task-guided question
- gap
- Turn 2: Responsive turn:                      repetition of the vocabulary and structure in the guided question                      pause                      answer or information requested by the question

Figure 1. Sequence of a question and its responsive turn.



answer to the next guided question as she also knows what the guided questions are. She again extends her turn with *because* (Line 30).

### Gaze Disengagement for Independent Word-Search

When the students pause to conduct a word search, they generally look away. Their word searches can be accompanied by hand gestures, and in most cases, the students attempt to provide their own solution without seeking assistance from their peers. Moreover, their peers in these situations do not offer help even when there are long pauses during the word searches, which may indicate some trouble, as in Extract 4.

#### Extract 4

- 41 Han: {so (.) what can you do with {your cell ↑phone, ah your ↑smart phone?  
 42 {{{gazes → slide}}  
 43 {{{gazes → Tru}}  
 44 (1.5)  
 45 Tru: → with my smart phone I can {(0.4) play game, (.) I can listen to ↑music,  
 46 {{{gazes up, gazes → ahead}}  
 47 → surf {the (.) the (.) internet, (.) and look up for the dictionary,  
 48 {{{gazes up}}  
 49 → and {0.2) store (.) information (.) many things.  
 50 {{{frowns, gazes up, down}}  
 51 Han: so (.) it's just like a {no::rml phone (.) {a normal ↑cell phone,  
 52 {{{gazes up}} {{{hand motion, turning to Tru}}  
 53 (0.9) ((Truong gazes down, ahead; Han: gazes → Tru))  
 54 Han: → my cell phone is not smart phone but I can {(0.7) play game, (.) listen to music,  
 55 {{{gazes down}}  
 56 Han: {search the web, (.) just like you.  
 57 Tru: {{{smiles}}

Both Han and Truong try to find words or phrases to express their ideas independently although their gestures and gaze disengagement suggest some effort in selecting the target vocabulary. The pause in Line 45 and the repetition of *the* in Line 47 show that Truong needs time for his word search. Such behaviours are accompanied by gaze withdrawal, which is directed up or down. In Line 45, Truong talks about the activities he can do with his phone. He initiates the talk with “with my smart phone I can” and the repetition of vocabulary and structure from the guided question, followed by a 0.4-second pause. During this pause, he directs his eyes up and ahead. On retrieving the word, he continues his turn with a list (Line 45) and then again conducts a word search in Line 47 when he repeats the word *the* with pauses while thinking. Similarly, Han’s word selection occurs with a pause (0.7 seconds) and gaze discontinuation in Line 54.

### Word Search Through Thinking Aloud in Vietnamese

Another feature of word search, the use of Vietnamese, the first language, as assistance to recall the needed lexical item, is found in the data. By self-talking in Vietnamese, the students immediately retrieve the word.



the responsive turn. They argued that it may be an effective tool for students with low levels of English proficiency. However, it sometimes creates redundancy as speakers in natural conversation seem to focus on responsive information rather than the repetition part leading to the response. Therefore, in many cases, proficient speakers use ellipsis (Halliday & Hassan, 1976) to focus on responsive information. In language practice, it also balances the focus on form and the focus on meaning (Sheen, 2002) to help the students control their turn construction.

In Extract 2, the responsive turn to the follow-up question is an ellipsis. Although the turn (Line 22) does not repeat part of the question, it focuses on responsive information. The ellipsis feature tends to be common in natural conversation, as seen in many extracts in the literature (e.g., Stivers, 2010). When the students extend the topic with follow-up questions, they focus on the meaning and the exchange of information. As a result, their language contains more features of natural or authentic interaction. To some extent, such extension of the topic enables the students to focus on meaning, creating meaningful contexts for students to practise and experience the target language.

The occurrence of ellipsis in the follow-up sequence and the absence of this feature in the task-guided question sequence suggest implications for language development in that students should be exposed more to features of natural or authentic interaction. Students should also be encouraged to extend the topic with follow-up questions to experience the diverse features of more communicative interaction in their use of English. This becomes significant in EFL educational contexts where the target language exposure outside classroom is limited.

The gaps between questioning turns and responsive turns in these extracts are quite long (Extract 1, Lines 3 and 6; Extract 2, Line 20; Extract 4, Line 44). Although in the literature, conversations among L2 language learners at a lower level of English proficiency tend to have no-overlap or no-gap turn transitions as the students are able to take turns at the precise timing (Hauser, 2009), long gaps between turns and pauses (as illustrated in Figure 1) within responsive turns seem to indicate either poor interactional competence or lack of engagement in the interaction.

The dominating pattern of opinion-reasons found in students' responsive turns, as illustrated in Extract 3, echo the findings in Hauser's (2009, 2010) studies when students formulated a turn with *because* to add one or two reasons for turn extensions. The current set of data shows the dominance of the opinion-reason pattern as a vehicle for students to extend their turn into a multi-unit turn. However, adding reasons is not the only way of extending responsive turns. Rather, they can be constructed with a wide range of patterns such as giving an explanation, giving opinions, describing, comparing, and contrasting. Therefore, students should experience different ways to extend turns and topics to fully experience the target language in discussion tasks. They need detailed guidelines and scaffolding from the teacher.

A possible explanation for this way of turn construction is an adoption or influence of the teacher's actions in their instruction or conversations for eliciting ideas with students. Hellermann's (2007) findings also show that students tend to adopt their teacher's talk in class for later use in other group-work or pair-work conversations. Therefore, besides encouraging students to extend turns more flexibly with other patterns, teachers also need to vary the language they use in class to elicit students' responses so that students can imitate the teacher's ways of extending turns in their tasks.

The analysis shows that in their practise of English, the students tend to construct their responsive turns independently while they attempt to express an idea in the target language, even when they need to pause for a word search. In Extract 4, by withdrawing gaze engagement during the word search time, the students' action is aligned with the findings for self-initiated / self-completed word searches in the literature (see, e.g., Kasper & Wagner, 2011). In Extract 5, the use of Vietnamese as a language switch for word search acts as meta-talk to help the student link his thought with the English word (see Ellis, 2012). As Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) stated, discussing vocabulary and meaning is one of four main functions of L1 use in students' interactions. Therefore, when they need to retrieve a word or a phrase, a language switch to L1 (Vietnamese) tends to be helpful. This also reflects the habit of learning a lexical item with its meaning in L1 in the Vietnamese EFL learning context.

However, the repeating occurrence of the word search, which usually occurs in the extending part of the turn, normally from the second turn unit forward, may indicate the lack of vocabulary for the topic of discussion. The students seem not to retrieve the vocabulary as fast as they need to speak fluently. When they need to do a word search, they disengage to independently think of a word. Although it is good for constructing the turn by themselves, the students also need to learn how to co-construct the turns. In Extracts 4 and 5, evidence of word searches is apparent, but the listeners in those turns do not offer help in such word-search actions. The focus in the task still seems to be within the frame of practice rather than communication. Students, hence, need teachers' support to develop their ability in co-constructing the meaning and responsive turns in discussion tasks.

By exploring the students' talk-in-interaction through microanalysis, the study revealed four features of responsive turns. The findings suggest that students' language-in-use in their interactional practice should be used more frequently to understand students' obstacles in speaking the target language. If students have chances to explore their interactional features by watching or listening to their performance, they will possibly have a positive reflection on their performance, resulting in the development of their L2 practice.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The first limitation of the study relates to the participant selection. The participants' English level was estimated approximately, owing to the guidance in the development of English proficiency in the course; the participants were not officially tested to ensure that they were in the pre-intermediate level. The second issue relates to some extraneous variables that might affect the way the students extended the topics that were not under investigation. Possibly they include the lecturers' task instruction, the preparation tasks before the discussions and the grouping methods. This limitation also suggests the need for further studies of these interrelationships to topic extension from CA perspectives by analysing the practices in a series of tasks in a lesson.

### **Conclusion**

This study is grounded in a CA perspective to explore features of responsive turns that students constructed in a Vietnamese EFL context. Through the microanalysis of the students' interaction at the pre-intermediate level of English, four emergent features of the students' responsive turns to the task-guided questions in discussion tasks are found. Firstly, it reveals the repetition of the lexical items, and sometimes of the grammatical structure between the responsive turn and its guided question. The interaction tended to align with the language practice purpose of a task, rather than with a communicative purpose. However, the repetition instances rarely occurred when the students extended the topic with follow-up questions. Rather, they focused more on

meaning and information. The responsive turns in such sequences also contain more features of natural interaction such as the use of ellipsis. Secondly, the analysis has uncovered the domination of the opinion-reason pattern in responsive turns. It suggests the students' limitation in developing multi-unit turns when they constructed responsive turns. Thirdly, the study shows the repeating occurrence of word search in students' interaction, indicating the lack of active vocabulary for the topic of discussion. The students' disengagement of eye contact to independently retrieve the word and to continue their turn suggests the need for learning some interactional techniques to co-construct the meaning in discussion. Finally, the analysis explicates the meta-talk in Vietnamese helped the students search for a word or a phrase in the target language.

By making the features of responsive turns visible with microanalysis from a CA perspective, the findings suggest that teachers should raise students' awareness of their language-in-use by analysing their performance in detail. This can be done with clear guidance of interactional features and learning foci. It also suggests that teachers should vary the ways they elicit responses in interactions so students can adopt the language for later use. Further research could be conducted regarding the use of microanalysis in raising the students' awareness of interactional features as well as in reflecting their performance.

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**Appendix**  
**Transcription Conventions**  
**(Based on Filipi, 2007, and Jefferson, 2004)**

The transcription conventions are the following:

(0.0)	Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence by tenth of seconds within or between utterances, so (1.2) is a pause of 1 second and two-tenths of a second.
(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a gap of less than two-tenths of a second within or between utterances.
→	An arrow indicates a point of interest which will be discussed in the analysis.
a::re	The colon indicates lengthening of the preceding sound. Multiple colons indicate a more prolonged sound.
<u>because</u>	Underlined type indicates marked stress.
SIMPLE:	Upper case indicates increased volume.
° may be °	Degree signs indicate the bracketed utterances are quieter in volume.
<that is >	The “less than” and “more than” symbols < > indicate slower speech than the surrounding talk.
[	A single left bracket indicates the point of overlap onset.
{	A curly left bracket indicates the incurring nonverbal onset.
((nods))	Double parentheses indicate a comment about actions noted in the transcript, including non-verbal actions.
↑	An upward arrow indicates raised pitch in the utterance part immediately following the arrow.
↓	A downward arrow indicates lowered pitch in the utterance part immediately following the arrow.
\$word\$	Dollar signs indicate a smiley voice.

# Developing Learner Autonomy: The Perceptions and Needs of Japanese EFL Learners

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Learner autonomy is one of the keys to successful language learning. Although Asian learners have been described as rather less autonomous compared with their Western counterparts, any learner can be autonomous if adequate support is provided. This study investigated the perceptions of Japanese university EFL learners in developing learner autonomy and explored how teachers can guide their learners to be more autonomous. An online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were conducted with both lower and higher proficiency learners. The study results show that learners of different proficiency levels have varying needs to enhance their learner autonomy. However, regardless of their current proficiency and autonomy levels, the participants expressed the need for teacher support to increase their autonomy levels. Based on their needs, this study offers possible autonomy enhancing classroom practices that are level appropriate.

Since its contribution to successful language has been widely accepted, for some decades now enhancing learner autonomy (LA) has been a major theme in language education. However, what is frequently said is that LA is rather a Western concept, and not suitable for Asian contexts (Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2010). Nevertheless, Asian students can demonstrate levels of LA as high as those of their Western counterparts if adequate LA training is provided (Ahmadi & Mahdavi-Zafarghandi, 2013; Littlewood, 1999). Nunan (2003) supports this view, stating that autonomy and dependence exist on a continuum and are not completely distinct constructs; degrees and levels of autonomy exist. Bearing this idea in mind, regardless of the cultural contexts in which learners learn, teachers can play a significant role in guiding learners to be more autonomous (Chan, Spratt, & Humphreys, 2002).

Although a large body of literature exists regarding LA, research that focuses on LA and proficiency levels in a Japanese university EFL context is still scarce. Based on the premise that Asian learners can be autonomous, this study focuses on examining the LA perceptions of Japanese university EFL learners and aims at exploring ways through which teachers can encourage learners to attain higher levels of LA. In this paper, the perceptions of lower and higher proficiency learners in developing autonomy will be explored, and then practical ideas for promoting LA will be outlined so that teachers can encourage both lower and higher

proficiency learners to develop their LA. After presenting related literature, the methodology used in this study will be described. Following the presentation of the major findings of the current study, the analysis of the results and educational implications will be outlined.

### **Literature Review**

In the last four decades, the concept of LA has been applied in a number of contexts in language learning and has been evolving in many directions to adapt to regional differences and levels of students. In defining LA, the notion overall is often conceptualized from two different angles. The first angle looks at students' involvement in classroom management, which was initially pointed out by Nunan (2003). For Nunan, students should be involved in the decision making process to create a more autonomy-enhancing environment in which students can take more initiative in their language learning based on their preferences.

The second view is that teachers / instructors should promote self-guided learning by giving students opportunities to choose their materials on their own. As part of the development of learner autonomy, Holec (1981) suggested fostering the ability to select methods and techniques to be used for language learning. Aligning with the classic definition of learner autonomy, "to have and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3), the ability of learners to select materials or learning activities based on their needs is a necessary precursor of LA that teachers should not forget to include in their curricula (Nunan, 2003).

Self-reflection is a skill that enables learners to proactively engage in their language learning inside and outside of classroom. According to Benson (2001), autonomous learners are those who can reflect on their learning at appropriate times and make actions based on the reflection. Self-reflection has started to be used in Japanese contexts more often with the intention of enhancing LA. For example, Noguchi and McCarthy (2010) used two self-reflective modules in which the researchers focused on offering personalized feedback to scaffold reflection skills for the research participants over a given period of time. Such personalized instruction, focusing on exchanges between teachers and students, has generally resulted in improving reflection skills among language learners (Lee, 2016).

Motivation is a concept that has been often tied in with LA. Ryan and Deci (2000) explained the relationship between motivation and LA in the Self-Determination Theory. According to the theory, intrinsic motivation, which is defined as "doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55), is fostered in an educational setting which increases the levels of autonomy, relatedness (a feeling of belonging through being valued and cared for by the teacher), and competence. Narrowing down the scope to the role of autonomy in the theory, the researchers further pointed out that students can reinforce their intrinsic motivation when they are given control over their learning process.

Only a few studies have investigated learners' perceptions of LA in the Japanese university EFL context. According to Sakai and Takagi (2009), in their study, the participants ( $N = 721$ ) showed negative views toward taking responsibility for classroom-related decisions regardless of their language proficiency; further, higher proficiency learners tend not to be involved with classroom decision-making processes because they believe in the ability of their teachers to make decisions regarding their courses. Shimo (2008) investigated the correlation between proficiency levels and learners' orientation toward improvement on learning environments and reflective learning and found a positive correlation between reflective learning and proficiency levels. However, no significant difference was found between the orientation toward improvement of learning environment and proficiency.

The two studies investigated LA perceptions of learners with quantitative approaches. However, qualitative investigation of learners' perceptions is also necessary to learn what lies behind learner perceptions. Therefore, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, this study set out the following research questions.

1. How do Japanese university EFL learners of different proficiency levels view the responsibilities of learners and teachers in learning English?
2. How do they view their ability to learn English autonomously?
3. What different learning activities and behaviors have they utilized and at what frequency?

## Methodology

### Participants

The participants of this study are 102 EFL learners at a private university in Japan. The participants were selected from a variety of English courses to represent learners of different proficiency levels and language learning experience. The participants were freshmen to senior students, including those who had studied abroad. Based on their TOEIC scores, the participants were categorized into two proficiency levels. The higher proficiency (HP) students ( $n = 36$ ) were those whose TOEIC scores were above 600, while the lower proficiency (LP) students ( $n = 66$ ) had scores below 285. Sixteen students (5 HP and 11 LP) voluntarily participated in follow-up interviews. The interview participants were selected based on availability and full completion of the questionnaire.

### Instruments

This study employed a questionnaire as a quantitative data collection tool and interviews as a qualitative data collection method to gain in-depth understanding of the questionnaire results.

**Questionnaire.** The questionnaire was adopted from Chan, Spratt, and Humphreys (2002) and slightly modified to fit the context of the present study (see Appendix A). Likert-type scales were used. The 47 questionnaire items were translated into Japanese by the lead author, and the translation was checked by a Japanese-English bilingual faculty member at the university. The questionnaire was conducted online to investigate (a) learner perspectives regarding the responsibilities of teachers and students on items such as goal setting in class and decision making regarding materials to be used inside and outside class, (b) the students' views on their current ability to learn English autonomously inside and outside class, (c) the degree of their motivation, and (d) the learning activities and behaviors that they have engaged in. Although the questionnaire asked about the participants' levels of motivation, this paper will not discuss the results because the focus of this study is not the investigation of learners' motivation to learn English.

**Interviews.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand in more detail the learner responses in the questionnaire (see Appendix E). In the interviews, the participants provided further explanation of their questionnaire responses using their language learning experiences and perspectives (see Appendix F). All the interviews were administered in Japanese due to the interviewees' preference, and the responses were audio-recorded.

The interviews were first transcribed in Japanese. The transcribed interviews were then translated into English by a Japanese-English bilingual faculty member at the university. After the translation process, a qualitative approach was used to analyze the interview data. The interview data were categorized into the themes investigated in the questionnaire. These classified learner responses were used to support the questionnaire results in more depth and as

a basis for the possible learner autonomy-enhancing classroom activities described in the educational implications section.

## Results and Discussion

### Responsibilities of Learners and Teachers in Learning English

The first section of the questionnaire examined the learners' perspectives on the responsibilities of learners themselves and their teachers inside and outside the classroom. Table B (see Appendix B) presents learners' views on how much responsibility learners and their teachers should have in the actions described in this section. For the smooth interpretation of the data, *not* and *a little* were categorized together, as were *mainly* and *completely*.

**HP learners.** HP learners tend to view behaviors shown in Items 1 (make sure of progress in a lesson), 3 (stimulate your interest in learning English), 4 (identify your weakness in your English), 5 (increase your motivation), and 6 (decide the objectives of your English course) as having shared responsibility. Approximately 80% or more of the HP learners responded that both learners and teachers are mainly responsible for those behaviors. Over 90% of the participants responded that Items 9 (decide the duration of each classroom activity) and 11 (evaluate your learning) are the areas for which they considered teachers to be mainly or completely responsible. Regarding Items 7 (decide the content of the next English lesson), 8 (choose activities for the next lesson), and 10 (choose materials to use in your English course), all 36 HP learners answered that teachers were mainly or completely responsible. On the other hand, a higher percentage of HP learners perceived that learners themselves, compared to teachers, are mainly or completely responsible for behaviors in Items 2 (make sure of your progress in your self-study, 94%) and 13 (decide what to learn in your self-study, 86%). These questionnaire results are supported by the interview data, which indicates HP learners prefer their teachers to make decisions that affect the entire class.

**LP learners.** Overall, the LP students expect teachers to take a great extent of the responsibility toward their learning; however, they expressed high learner responsibility toward self-evaluation in Items 1 (79%) and 4 (89%) and self-guided learning in Items 3 (68%) and 13 (67%). On the other hand, much lower percentages of LP students showed they should be responsible for selecting content of lessons as shown in Item 7 (33%) and materials of the course as indicated in Item 10 (27%).

The semi-structured interviews revealed a variety of views on selecting content and materials for courses. Ten of the LP learners would like to be involved in deciding course materials and lesson content, but they do not know how to choose these because they have never been involved with such classroom decision making. The majority of the LP students feel that they should also be responsible for the evaluation of the course with their teachers. Some LP students answered that they were familiar with evaluating their courses in general because they have to fill in course evaluation questionnaires at the end of each semester.

### The Ability to Learn English Autonomously

Table C (Appendix C) indicates how learners view their ability to be autonomous in their learning process. Learners rated their abilities on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 meaning *Very poor*, 3 meaning *OK*, and 5 meaning *Very good*. The choice *OK* was included for learners who feel their ability to be autonomous is neither poor nor good. The responses *Very poor* and *poor* were categorized together, and *good* and *very good* were also classified into one category for the ease of interpretation.

**HP learners.** HP learners' views on their own ability to make decisions differ depending on whether their decision is about their self-study or their English classes. These learners tend to show confidence in their decision-making abilities to choose learning activities outside class (Item 15, 78%) and learning objectives for their self-study (Item 17, 78%). However, approximately 80% expressed that their ability to choose the content (Item 18) and learning materials (Item 20) for their class was poor or very poor.

Lack of confidence in decision making is possibly a major cause of this seemingly dependent view regarding class-related decision making. Four of the HP interview participants answered that they were not sure what variety of activities, materials, and strategies were available for what purposes. According to them, this limited knowledge causes them to be unsure whether other classmates can benefit from their decisions. The HP learners expressed that their lack of confidence in decision making leads them to view that teachers should take responsibility for class-related decisions.

**LP learners.** For LP learners, the results elicited in this section have similar tendencies regarding decision making to those that were found in the previous section. The LP group perceived that they had good or very good abilities regarding self-study and course evaluation shown in Items 15 (53%), 17 (48%), 19 (47%), and 23 (45%). At the same time, less than 25% of the LP students reported that they would be very poor or poor in conducting actions described. In the interviews, LP learners reported that the materials they selected tended not to match their goals. For example, some interview participants stated that they wanted to increase their fluency but were studying only reading and listening for the TOEIC test.

Responses in Item 18 (68%) and Item 20 (64%) indicated that LP learners have less confidence in their ability to select lesson content and materials. The interview data suggested that they did not believe that they were capable of choosing appropriate content or materials that would meet the demands of the greatest number of students.

### **Learning Activities and Behaviors**

Table D (see Appendix D) shows the percentages of HP learners who engaged in the learning activities and behaviors outside of class specified in Items 26 to 42 and the learning behaviors in class in Items 43-47. Learner responses *never* and *rarely* were grouped into one category, and *sometimes* and *often* were categorized into another category for ease of interpretation.

#### **Learning activities and behaviors outside of the class.**

**HP learners.** In general, HP learners employed a wide range of activities for improving their English, but the frequencies of the use of the activities differed widely. For example, over 80% of the HP learners reported that they listened to English songs (83%, Item 34), talked to foreigners in English (81%, Item 35) and used the internet (97%, Item 40). On the other hand, only a small body of the HP learners have sometimes or often engaged in certain activities such as writing a diary in English (11%, Item 39) and doing grammar exercises (28%, Item 37). In the interviews, HP learners also expressed a willingness to learn about more learning activities. They added that knowing which activities were beneficial and effective for improving particular skills was helpful for them.

**LP learners.** The majority of the LP group chose never or rarely for all but two of the items in this section regarding the frequency of using learning activities for their self-study. In particular, more than 90% of the LP learners reported that they never or rarely read newspapers (95%, Item 29), do self-study in a group (91%, Item 36), or keep an English diary (97%, Item 39). Among the items in the practiced outside the classroom, the respondents reported they

sometimes or often use English songs (76%, Item 34) and movies (50%, Item 38) as learning activities outside of the classroom.

The interview results indicate that the LP group selects fewer learning activities for their self-guided learning. Five interviewees attribute this tendency to their lack of experience in using activities and in receiving training from the teacher. One interview participant answered that he was not taught about learning activities by his teacher nor was he familiar with the activities.

### **Learning behaviors inside class.**

**HP learners.** The majority of HP learners have sometimes or often engaged in various autonomous behaviors in class, except for making suggestions to teachers. In the interviews, HP learners expressed their willingness to be more involved in class-related decisions. However, voicing opinions that can affect the entire class seemed to be their challenge. Only 11% of the HP learners sometimes or often made suggestions to their teachers (Item 45). Considering the questionnaire results and those of the interviews, the primary obstacle lying behind such challenges seems to be the learners' confidence issues regarding class-related decisions.

**LP learners.** Similar to HP learners, making suggestions to their teachers (Item 45) was the least frequent behavior by LP learners. Only 9% of them answered they have often or sometimes made suggestions to their teachers.

Considering the top-down model of education in Japan (Nakata, 2011), the participants' overall answers fairly articulate the continued effects of classrooms of such nature on their behaviors in the classroom. In particular, the majority of participants answered that they never or rarely give suggestions to their teachers. Giving suggestions to a higher status figure constitutes a highly face-threatening act, so students in countries with Confucian ethics, including Japan, tend to avoid letting such situations happen (Doi, 1994; Wang, Pomerantz & Chen, 2007).

## **Educational Implications**

### **Higher Proficiency Group**

Based on the questionnaire and interview results, this section offers some ideas of what teachers can do to enhance their HP students' learner autonomy levels. The first idea is to clarify the pedagogical outcomes of assignments and learning activities. This can serve multiple purposes in terms of enhancing their students' autonomy levels. For example, this can be a way for teachers to fuel learners' motivation to study English. All of the HP interviewees mentioned that they would be motivated if they could clearly see what skills could be improved by specific activities. In addition, a clear explanation of pedagogical goals can enable learners to be confidently involved in class-related decision making processes. HP learners expressed their willingness to be involved in decision making so that they can create a class that is more in line with learner needs. However, their involvement is hampered by their lack of confidence in making class-related decisions such as choosing class activities. HP learners expressed concern that their choices may not be beneficial for other students, and therefore, teachers should decide on the class activities, materials, and contents. Knowing the pedagogical outcomes of class activities and assignments may alleviate this anxiety and eventually provide HP learners confidence in making class-related decisions.

Encouraging learner choices in class through scaffolding decision making is another action that teachers can implement. The study results indicate that HP learners tend to place the responsibility to make class-related decisions on teachers despite the learners' willingness to

increase their involvement in decision making in class. To fill this gap, decision making should be scaffolded for learners. Teachers can start with involving learners in relatively easy decision making, such as providing choices regarding the sequence of activities (Nunan, 2003). Through decision-making, the involvement of learners in their English classes can be enhanced (Benson, 2001).

Giving HP learners opportunities to reflect on their own progress and evaluate their learning process is an action teachers can do to enhance learner autonomy. In the questionnaire, over 80% of HP learners responded that learners as well as teachers are responsible for making sure of learners' progress in the classroom, and identifying their weakness. Although actualizing the complete shift of such responsibility from teachers to learners may be challenging, as a suggestion, learning diaries and evaluation sheets can provide learners with opportunities to gauge their own learning (Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2010). In the use of those tools, it may be teachers who create the criteria of what to reflect on in most cases. However, students can learn what aspects of learning they should pay attention to when reflecting on their learning process. If HP learners can increase their confidence in evaluating their own progress, this can lead to increased confidence and ability to decide class objectives.

### **Lower Proficiency Group**

LP learners should be provided with more decision-making opportunities. According to the questionnaire and interview results, LP learners feel they should be less responsible or are less competent to be involved in class-related decision making. This attitude derives from their lack of such decision-making experience. Students need teachers to train and support them by providing them with opportunities to participate in selecting course materials, content, or evaluation methods to be more autonomous learners (Nunan, 2003). Such in-class support will not only increase students' contribution to classroom decision making process but also foster skills to select appropriate materials for their own learning (Noguchi & McCarthy, 2010).

Improvements in the ability to choose appropriate learning materials can encourage LP learners to study English independently in an effective manner. In this study, discrepancies between learners' goals and means were found. If LP learners can employ means that can directly address their goals, they are more likely to improve their target skills. To help LP learners with their skills, teachers can suggest some online materials. Online materials such as podcasts, short YouTube video clips, and other learning websites are easy to access and provide learning materials of a wide range of levels.

Lastly, giving LP learners chances to measure their own progress can be effective in enhancing LA. For example, taking a test could provide learners with immediate feedback on their language learning progress. By taking a test, they can see where they stand in their language learning. If they see any progress, that may give them confidence that their study methods are effective. If they cannot see progress, they should be encouraged to reflect on their learning methods (Benson, 2001).

### **Research Limitations**

This study did not examine the impact of variables such as majors, year of study, and learning experience of the research participants, which might have had some influence on the questionnaire results. Given the shortcomings of the current research, future research can examine how these variables influence the development of learner autonomy and provide some direction to create approaches to elevate the autonomy levels of learners with different needs.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated the perceptions of Japanese university EFL learners of different proficiency levels on the responsibilities of learners and teachers, their ability to carry out autonomous actions, and the frequency that they employed a variety of learning activities and behaviors. The major need of the HP learners in this study is to receive clear explanations on pedagogical purposes for inside and outside classroom activities. This will enable HP learners to engage in self-guided learning in a more efficient manner. The needs found in the study for the LP group are the involvement to decision making regarding language learning in and outside of the class, constant assessment of their own learning process, and the use of a wider variety of learning activities and behaviors. Aside from the challenges found in the study for both groups, such as their lower confidence in making classroom-related decisions, the study highlights that both HP and LP learners possess willingness to be involved in decision making inside and outside class, especially in the selection of course content and materials. With such willingness, familiarizing learners with a wider variety of learning materials, activities, and behaviors is what teachers can do in class. By understanding learner needs and appropriately scaffolding decision making, teachers can guide and support their learners in developing learner autonomy regardless of their current proficiency levels.

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**Appendix A**  
**Learner Autonomy Questionnaire**  
**(Adapted from Chan, Spratt, & Humphreys, 2002)**

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

TOEIC Score \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 1: Responsibilities (Please check ✓ both “Yours” and “Your teacher’s” choices)**

**When you are taking English classes, whose responsibility should it be to:**

		Not at all	A little	Mainly	Completely
1.	make sure of your progress in a lesson?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
2.	make sure of your progress in your self-study?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
3.	stimulate your interest in learning English?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
4.	identify your weakness in your English?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
5.	increase your motivation?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
6.	decide the objectives of your English course?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
7.	decide the content of the next English lesson?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
8.	choose activities for the next lesson?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
9.	decide the duration of each classroom activity?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
10.	choose materials to be used in your English course?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
11.	evaluate your learning?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
12.	evaluate your course?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			
13.	decide what to learn in your self-study?	A. Yours			
		B. Your teacher's			

**Section 2: Abilities (Please check ✓the choices that describe you the most.)**

If you have the following opportunities, how good do you think you would be at:

	Very poor	Poor	OK	Good	Very good
14. choosing learning activities for your class?					
15. choosing learning activities outside class?					
16. choosing learning objectives for your class?					
17. choosing learning objectives for your self-study?					
18. choosing the content of every class?					
19. evaluating your course?					
20. choosing learning materials for your class?					
21. identifying weakness in your English?					
22. evaluating your learning?					
23. choosing learning materials to be used outside class?					
24. deciding the duration of each activity in your self-study?					

**Section 3: Motivation (Please choose the best answer that describes you the most.)**

	Very high	High	Neither	Low	Very low
25. How high is your motivation to learn English?					

**Section 4: Activities and Behaviors (Please check ✓the answer that describes you the most.)**

In this academic year, how often have you:

**Outside Class**

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
26. read grammar books on your own?				
27. done assignments which are not compulsory?				
28. noted down new words and their meanings?				
29. read newspaper in English?				
30. sent emails in English?				
31. read books or magazines in the English?				
32. watched English TV programs?				
33. listened to the radio or podcast in English?				
34. listened to English songs?				
35. talked with foreigners in English?				
36. done English self-study in a group?				
37. done grammar exercises?				
38. watched English movies?				
39. written a diary in English?				
40. used the internet in English?				
41. revised your written work without being told to do so?				
42. attended a self-study center, for example a CALL room?				

**Inside Class**

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
43. asked the teacher questions when you didn't understand?				
44. noted down new information?				
45. made suggestions to the teacher?				
46. taken opportunities to speak in English?				
47. discussed problems in learning with your classmates?				

**Appendix B**  
**Results for Section 1 of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire**

**Table B**  
**Participants' Perceptions of Their and Their Teachers' Responsibilities**

	Higher Proficiency				Lower Proficiency			
	Learner responsibility		Teacher responsibility		Learner responsibility		Teacher responsibility	
	Not / A little	Mainly / Completely	Not / A little	Mainly / Completely	Not / A little	Mainly / Completely	Not / A little	Mainly / Completely
1. Make sure of your progress in a lesson	4 (11%)	32 (89%)	4 (11%)	32 (89%)	14 (21%)	52 (79%)	4 (6%)	62 (94%)
2. Make sure of your progress in your self-study	2 (6%)	34 (94%)	11 (31%)	25 (69%)	31 (47%)	35 (53%)	9 (14%)	57 (86%)
3. Stimulate your interest in learning English	6 (17%)	30 (83%)	5 (14%)	31 (86%)	21 (32%)	45 (68%)	19 (29%)	47 (71%)
4. Identify your weakness in your English	5 (14%)	31 (86%)	5 (14%)	31 (86%)	7 (11%)	59 (89%)	15 (23%)	51 (77%)
5. Increase your motivation	5 (14%)	31 (86%)	6 (17%)	30 (83%)	20 (30%)	46 (70%)	8 (12%)	58 (88%)
6. Decide the objectives of your English course	8 (22%)	28 (78%)	8 (22%)	28 (78%)	26 (39%)	40 (61%)	15 (23%)	51 (77%)
7. Decide the content of the next English lesson	21 (58%)	15 (42%)	0 (0%)	36 (100%)	44 (67%)	22 (33%)	6 (9%)	60 (91%)
8. Choose activities for the next lesson	21 (58%)	15 (42%)	0 (0%)	36 (100%)	39 (59%)	27 (41%)	6 (9%)	60 (91%)
9. Decide the duration of each classroom activity	16 (44%)	20 (56%)	2 (6%)	34 (94%)	31 (47%)	35 (53%)	12 (18%)	54 (82%)
10. Choose materials to use in your English course	30 (83%)	6 (17%)	0 (0%)	36 (100%)	48 (73%)	18 (27%)	6 (9%)	60 (91%)
11. Evaluate your learning	16 (44%)	20 (56%)	3 (8%)	33 (92%)	32 (48%)	34 (52%)	7 (11%)	59 (89%)
12. Evaluate your course	15 (42%)	21 (58%)	10 (28%)	26 (72%)	23 (35%)	43 (65%)	24 (36%)	42 (64%)
13. Decide what to learn in your self-study	5 (14%)	31 (86%)	12 (33%)	24 (67%)	22 (33%)	44 (67%)	20 (30%)	46 (70%)

**Appendix C**  
**Results for Section 2 of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire**

**Table C**  
***Participants' Views of Their Abilities in Taking Responsibility In and Outside Class***

	Higher Proficiency			Lower Proficiency		
	Very poor / Poor	OK	Good / Very good	Very poor / Poor	OK	Good / Very good
14. Choosing learning activities for your class	14 (39%)	15 (42%)	7 (19%)	21 (32%)	26 (39%)	19 (29%)
15. Choosing learning activities outside class	5 (14%)	3 (8%)	28 (78%)	6 (9%)	25 (38%)	35 (53%)
16. Choosing learning objectives for your class	5 (14%)	15 (42%)	16 (44%)	21 (32%)	24 (36%)	21 (32%)
17. Choosing learning objectives for your self-study	4 (11%)	4 (11%)	28 (78%)	15 (23%)	19 (29%)	32 (48%)
18. Choosing the content of every class	29 (81%)	6 (17%)	1 (3%)	45 (68%)	12 (18%)	9 (14%)
19. Evaluating your course	2 (6%)	17 (47%)	17 (47%)	13 (20%)	22 (33%)	31 (47%)
20. Choosing learning materials for your class	28 (78%)	5 (14%)	3 (8%)	42 (64%)	14 (21%)	10 (15%)
21. Identifying your weaknesses in English	4 (11%)	14 (39%)	18 (50%)	16 (24%)	23 (35%)	27 (41%)
22. Evaluating your learning	7 (19%)	16 (44%)	13 (36%)	22 (33%)	24 (36%)	20 (30%)
23. Choosing learning materials to be used outside class	7 (19%)	14 (39%)	15 (42%)	15 (23%)	21 (32%)	30 (45%)
24. Determining of the duration of each activity in your self-study	5 (14%)	8 (22%)	23 (64%)	17 (26%)	20 (30%)	29 (44%)

**Appendix D**  
**Results for Section 4 of the Learner Autonomy Questionnaire**

**Table D**  
**Frequency of Using Learning Activities and Behaviors In and Outside Class**

	Higher Proficiency		Lower Proficiency	
	Never / Rarely	Sometimes / Often	Never / Rarely	Sometimes / Often
26. Read grammar books on your own	24 (67%)	12 (33%)	52 (79%)	14 (21%)
27. Do assignments which are not compulsory	15 (42%)	21 (58%)	42 (64%)	24 (36%)
28. Note down new words and their meanings	14 (39%)	22 (61%)	38 (58%)	28 (42%)
29. Read newspaper in English	20 (56%)	16 (44%)	63 (95%)	3 (5%)
30. Send emails in English	10 (28%)	26 (72%)	55 (83%)	11 (17%)
31. Read books or magazines in English	13 (36%)	23 (64%)	58 (88%)	8 (12%)
32. Watch English TV programs	17 (47%)	19 (53%)	55 (83%)	11 (17%)
33. Listen to radio or podcasts in English	19 (53%)	17 (47%)	57 (86%)	9 (14%)
34. Listen to English songs	6 (17%)	30 (83%)	16 (24%)	50 (76%)
35. Talk with foreigners in English	7 (19%)	29 (81%)	53 (80%)	13 (20%)
36. Do English self-study in a group	23 (64%)	13 (36%)	60 (91%)	6 (9%)
37. Do grammar exercises	26 (72%)	10 (28%)	42 (64%)	24 (36%)
38. Watch English movies	13 (36%)	23 (64%)	33 (50%)	33 (50%)
39. Write a diary in English	32 (89%)	4 (11%)	64 (97%)	2 (3%)
40. Use the internet in English	1 (3%)	35 (97%)	51 (77%)	15 (23%)
41. Revise your written work without being told to do so	12 (33%)	24 (67%)	46 (70%)	20 (30%)
42. Attend a self-access center, for example, a CALL room	27 (75%)	9 (25%)	58 (88%)	8 (12%)
43. Ask the teacher questions when you didn't understand	14 (39%)	22 (61%)	30 (45%)	36 (55%)
44. Note down new information	5 (14%)	31 (86%)	25 (38%)	41 (62%)
45. Make suggestions to the teacher	32 (89%)	4 (11%)	60 (91%)	6 (9%)
46. Take opportunities to speak in English	5 (14%)	31 (86%)	38 (58%)	28 (42%)
47. Discuss learning problems with your classmates	17 (47%)	19 (53%)	51 (77%)	15 (23%)

**Appendix E**  
**Sample Interview Questions**

1. What does autonomy mean to you?
2. Do you think it is necessary to improve your autonomy to elevate your English level in general? Why do you think so?
3. Do you think there is any connection between improvement on your English proficiency and autonomy?
4. Comparing with the past, do you think that you have increased your autonomy over the years or after you entered the university up to now?
5. How have you improved your autonomy over the past years or after you entered the university up to now?
6. How often do you reflect on your English language learning or the learning process?
7. What is your reaction if your teacher gives you some room to decide classroom content and grading criteria?
8. Why did you put more weight on teachers' role on Item X in the first section of the questionnaire? What would your answer toward this question have been when you were a first-year student? How has your answer changed?
9. Based on your experience, what do you think are the differences between English education up until high school and university?
10. Have your English teachers in university given you opportunities to improve your learner autonomy?
11. How do you monitor your language learning, how do you check your improvement on your language learning, and how often do you reflect on your study plan and goals?
12. You said you are "confident enough" to Item X in Section 2 of the questionnaire. Why do you think so? Have you ever received any training for that?
13. Would you like to add anything to what you have said?

**Appendix F**  
**Some Interview Excerpts**

HP Learners

1. I want my teachers to provide more practices for self-study to study independently.
2. I would like to know what to do to achieve my goal.
3. I am not sure whether my way of studying can be beneficial for other students.
4. I want to see clear purposes of each activity. That makes me motivated.
5. I would like to be involved in classroom decision making if classes will be held in a way our needs are met.

LP Learners

1. I wish I could be involved in decision making process in my course. But I think teacher should decide the content of the course because he/she is an expert.
2. I need to have some framework to study within. Being given too much freedom is challenging for me.
3. I know how to make small goals but don't know how to set clear goals to achieve my big goal.

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*Language Education in Asia* (LEiA) presents well-researched aspects of language education and learning, innovative, practical approaches to classroom practice, discussion on language education issues, and reviews of books on research, practice, or issues in language education relevant to Asia, particularly the ASEAN region. Papers can be submitted by researchers, educators, educational leaders, and other language education professionals. All papers are blind-reviewed by members of the Editorial Board. Accepted papers are published on a biannual basis. From March 2017, each volume is online for public viewing and downloading at <http://www.leia.org>.

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