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From the Editors:

We are pleased to be publishing our inaugural peer-reviewed issue of the NEAR conference proceedings. While we have made post-conference papers available in the past, we have now received an ISSN number, set up a peer-review process, and are able to provide authors with another more “official” venue for their work.

In this first issue, we are happy to present works on three topics. The first, *Deep Discussion Using Flipped Classroom Design*, by Cheryl Kirchoff, Trane deVore and Jean-Pierre J. Richard, discusses the benefits of using a flipped classroom approach in university classes in order to help students achieve academic goals. The second, *Self-Efficacy and IELTS: A Case of EAP Learners in Japan*, by Nicholas Marx and Marshall Klassen, focuses on links between students’ judgements about their self-efficacy in English and how that relates to their IELTS scores. The third, *Closing Gaps in Inclusive Support in Japanese Tertiary Education*, by Michael Yap, Clare Butson, and Ayako Ooikawa is an important overview of provisions for special education in Japan, issues students with special needs face, and possible solutions to these problems.

We hope you will enjoy reading and benefit from this research.

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Deeper Discussion Using Flipped Classroom Design¹

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Abstract

The Ministry of Education recommends active learning and small group discussion as a tool for transforming university education so that graduates have the capabilities to address the challenges that Japan is facing (MEXT, 2012). However, many Japanese learners seem to have misconceptions about the nature of small group discussion and have weaknesses when they engage in English discussion. Flipped classroom is a pedagogical approach that can increase active learning without reducing the internalization of new knowledge by learners (Matsushita 2018). In this paper, we suggest that the flipped classroom approach can prepare Japanese university students to do small group discussion on academic topics. Elements of flipped lessons for discussion on academic topics, and example lesson designs from the writers' experiences of teaching discussion to first-year university students are provided. Flipped classroom design offers Japanese EFL learners the time they need to develop schema and formulate opinions for academic discussion.

アクティブラーニングと小グループディスカッションは日本の大学の英語教育の重大な目標である(MEXT, 2012)。しかし、多くの日本人学習者は小グループディスカッションについて誤解を持つこととディスカッションをすることにたいして弱さを持つらしい。反転授業は、新しい知識を学ばせることを減らせずにアクティブラーニングを増やせる教育方法である(松下 2018)。本稿の手案は、反転授業は日本人大学生を高レベルの課題についてのディスカッションを準備できる方法である。著者の大学1年生にディスカッションを教えるサンプル・レッスンはどのように反転授業が英語教育に適用するかを示す。反転授業は日本人学習者に高レベルのディスカッションのための意見や関連な知識を準備する機会を与えることが提案されている。最後に、学習者の反転授業の経験についてのデータが紹介されている。

Key words: small group discussion, flipped classroom, Japanese EFL learners

¹ Suggested Citation

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“Active learning” describes one aim of education reform that replaces passive learning with participatory learning. However, active learning has been criticized for emphasizing classroom activities at the expense of teaching new knowledge (Matsushita, 2018). The flipped classroom approach is a pedagogical method that allows for active learning along with acquiring new knowledge (Mori, 2018).

The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology’s definition of active learning includes discussion as an example of active learning (MEXT, 2012). Small group discussion involves two or more people who exchange ideas, through listening and responding, to make a decision or deepen understanding of a particular topic. Language educators use small group discussion to provide learners with opportunities to engage in the target language for meaningful interaction (Willis & Willis, 2007).

When Japanese university students discuss in the EFL classroom, three problems are observed: discussants (1) aim to win, as in a debate; (2) use nonstandard lengthy pauses before saying opinions; and (3) decide an order in which each discussant speaks once to merely report, not exchange, ideas in turn. Stroud (2015) stated, “Expecting [Japanese university students] to listen to the opinions of others and then immediately respond to such opinions may be unrealistic” (p. 200). Discussion involves communication between multiple people which should have many unseen influences on group dynamics (Stroud, 2018). However, the result of many Japanese classroom discussions is not an exchange of ideas, but a series of monologues.

To improve learners’ discussion ability, instructors can explain what discussion should be, and teach phrases commonly used in discussion (Ryan, 2003). Stroud (2015) has demonstrated that giving learners pre-discussion planning time can also assist them. Japanese learners would benefit from a model of what classroom discussion is, yet, how can an individual instructor demonstrate discussion?

The university setting that is described in this paper envisions class discussion as a first step in the students’ education. The authors prioritized teaching small group discussion skills in the English program beginning in the second half of Year One. To teach EFL discussion, the authors found that flipped classroom design can provide learners with models of discussion and time needed for gaining background knowledge or formulating opinions. In this paper, we explain the flipped classroom approach from its origins in North America to its use in Asia and in Japan. Elements of flipped lessons that promote deeper classroom discussion among Japanese university students and example flipped lessons are described. The authors of this paper suggest that flipped classroom design is beneficial in EFL classrooms that aim to promote learners’ small group discussion abilities.

Origins of the Flipped Classroom

Flipped Classroom Design in the United States of America

The flipped classroom approach was popularized within the United States over the past two decades, partially due to the attention that it has garnered through articles in numerous popular media sources (as cited in Brame, 2013; Prefume, 2015). This followed on the work of Bergmann and Sams (2012) who introduced flipped classroom design at the high school level with their influential *Flip Your Classroom*. In addition, it

has been brought to public attention through institutions such as the non-profit Khan Academy (Prefume, 2015).

According to a summary written by Brame (2013), at the university level multiple versions of flipped classroom design predate the current trend for flipping. For example, Walvoord and Anderson (1998) advocated an approach for a variety of subject areas that “turn the course on the head” (p. 88) by emphasizing first-exposure learning before class and then processing material within the classroom. As Brame also pointed out, Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000) used an approach they called “the inverted classroom” to teach an introductory economics course. In the inverted classroom outside materials such as videos and slideshows with voiceover were used to give students first exposure to classroom materials resulting in “students [taking] ownership of their learning” (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000, p. 37). A different approach, developed by Crouch and Mazur, involves what is called “peer instruction.” This involves using first-exposure techniques as well as assignments to ensure students are prepared for class, coupled with peer instruction about difficult points in conjunction with short lectures on the part of instructors (Brame 2013; Crouch & Mazur, 2001). In conjunction with the spread of approaches such as these, symposia surrounding flipped approaches to teaching have been held at a number of prominent universities (Schell, 2016).

In the United States, one notable aspect of flipped pedagogy is that although flipped classroom approaches have been used in humanities classes, the preponderance of flipped methodological practice has been developed in conjunction with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) subjects. Despite the association between the flipped classroom and STEM, the benefits of the flipped approach are clearly applicable in a variety of teaching contexts. As Bergmann and Sams (2012) indicated, video and other first-exposure materials have the benefit of allowing students to replay their teachers, that is, to learn at their own pace and review the material that they have found difficult to understand. This could be useful in EFL contexts because students with different language abilities need varying amounts of time to absorb materials. Furthermore, the flipped classroom approach increases student-to-student interaction (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). However, one of the biggest potential benefits in relation to language learning has to do with the stepped retrieval pattern that this approach allows. Schell (2016), for example, summarized recent scholarship in cognitive science that has demonstrated that repeated acts of retrieval is the most effective way to deeply internalize new information. First-exposure activities, such as having students prepare for class by watching a video and answering questions about it, prepare students for retrieval events that will take place within the classroom. Retrieval is most effective when stepped at intervals, so that students have multiple opportunities to retrieve the same information over multiple lessons (Schell). Using a flipped methodology in conjunction with stepped interval retrieval would seem like an ideal tool for the EFL classroom.

Flipped Classroom Design in Asia

Chua and Lateef (2014) suggested that Asian education might have different characteristics compared with North American education with regards to the role of the teacher and that of the student. This cultural difference plays an important role in Chua and Lateef’s investigation of flipped classroom design. They analyzed 12 case studies of flipped classroom design, from various academic fields, in Asian university classrooms

(e.g., Singapore, Malaysia, China, India, South Korea, Japan and others). All 12 studies reported on a class in which first exposure to theoretical aspects was presented online prior to class, and class time was used for discussion, problem solving or other applications of theory. Learners approved of the flipped classroom method, and wrote that in comparison to traditional lecture classes, they benefitted from the extra time with instructors. The instructors in these 12 case studies recommended flipped classroom design because of its ability to enhance learner engagement in class and increase support for slower learners.

However, there has been little research that focuses specifically on the role of flipped classroom design for language teaching in Asia. Kang (2015) compared the effectiveness of traditional and flipped classrooms of a general English course in South Korea. The EFL learners in the flipped classrooms showed statistically significant gains in general English, grammar, and vocabulary after 15 weeks, compared with the EFL learners in the traditional classrooms; the learners preferred the flipped class because it provided more interaction with classmates and the instructor; however, problems with learners who did not do their pre-class assignments were identified. Li (2016) investigated the effects of teaching design and the satisfaction of learners in a second-year oral English course at a Chinese university which used flipped classroom design. Li found that a large majority of learners indicated that flipped classroom design was effective in improving their oral English.

Flipped Classroom Design in Japan

In Japan, flipped classroom in language education has been researched particularly by members of the CALL community who have used this pedagogical approach in order to increase student engagement, autonomy and class-time efficiency. Loucky (2016) described flipped classes as, classes “that shift learning responsibility towards students and employ more media outside of class to help learners prepare to contribute more during classroom time” (p. 168). Obari and Lambacker (2015) compared the effectiveness of the flipped classroom to a traditional university classroom. The flipped classroom students showed a higher level of improvement on pre and post Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) tests, although tests of significance were not reported. Obari and Lambacker attributed the improvement in learners’ TOEIC scores to affective factors of the flipped classroom such as mobile learning being motivating and convenient for learners. While Obari and Lambacker’s research is centered on TOEIC tests, it is likely that appropriate application of the flipped learning structure in conjunction with non-traditional delivery methods that allow students to learn when and where they want to will result in students spending more time on task and engaging in more meaningful EFL learning activities.

For Japanese education researchers, flipped classroom is a way of implementing active learning. However, one criticism of active learning is that in attempting to push students to verbalize learning, instructors reduce lecture time, resulting in less engagement with new information (Matsushita, 2018). To correct this imbalance Matsushita and others promote “deep active learning” of which the flipped classroom is one form. Mori (2018) stated, “The flipped classroom is a type of active learning course design that facilitates deeper understanding . . . through autonomous learning amidst interaction with others” (p. 107). Mori (2018) analyzed two case studies, one each in Natural Sciences and Information Sciences. In the former, at the

beginning of a new academic year, traditional lecture classes were replaced by flipped classroom design for students acquiring new knowledge. Although the students who had learned in the traditional classes and in the flipped classroom were believed to have similar abilities at the beginning of the year upon entering university, class scores were reportedly higher for students who studied using the flipped classroom. Mori (2018) noted that in the knowledge acquisition model, students are expected to identify a closed-ended solution, and therefore instructors can more easily support students' understanding. In the latter case study, students were doing investigative learning, which results in open-ended solutions. Mori (2018) cautioned that this latter model might encourage the emergence of free riders (i.e., students who do not complete the pre-class assignments and who coast on the efforts of others), thus instructors need to do more to support students as they work together.

Mori's (2019) analysis of 800 active learning lessons by Japanese teachers identified principles for effective student learning. First, learners should internalize new knowledge, then externalize that knowledge, followed by reflection in which they again internalize the knowledge. Second, learners should begin learning individually, then confirm that learning in a group, and then reflect individually, this time at a deeper level. These principles of flipped classroom design are illustrated in Figure 1.

	Before Class		During Class		After Class
Knowledge:	Internalize		Verbalize		Re-internalize
Learner:	Individual	→	Group	→	Individual
Result:	"I think I understand"		"We check. We struggle."		"I got it."

Figure 1. Flipped classroom design principles. Adapted from Mori (2019, February).

Elements of Flipped Classroom Design for Small Group Discussion

Pre-discussion Preparation

The first element of a flipped lesson for small group discussion is the pre-discussion preparation assignment. The purpose is for learners to gain knowledge on the topic and related vocabulary, and formulate opinions needed for the discussion. These first-exposure materials can be digital or texts, in the learners' L1 or L2. A key feature of pre-discussion preparation assignments is a mechanism for learners to show the instructor that the assignment is completed before class. Completion can be indicated through an on-line feedback form, a quiz at the beginning of class, or showing the instructor completed notes. Without a requirement to prove completion of the assignment, it is possible for students to avoid doing assignments, and thus be unable to fully participate in the group discussion. A case study of flipped classroom practitioners found that all agreed that "a critical factor in making an effective flipped course is that the students have learned the knowledge in the pre-class learning" (Long, Cummins, & Waugh, 2017, p. 188).

Collaborative tasks in class

The second step of flipped classroom design is in-class collaborative tasks that are designed so learners externalize information gained in the pre-discussion assignment. The purpose of this step is for learners to verbalize their in-process learning. A series of tasks can lead learners from checking the accuracy of their prepared answers, to simply expressing prepared opinions, and then on to a small group discussion. While tasks involving both open- or closed-ended solutions are possible, Mori (2018) found that learners more clearly understand task solutions and more actively engage during close-ended tasks. This being the case, it is likely that discussions with a close-ended task are most effective in causing all members of a discussion group to participate. Close-ended tasks can include solving a problem, agreeing on an order of elements, or forming consensus. Learners may struggle to use new language or concepts; however, peers and the instructor can assist in the discussion.

Instructor's summary

Following the in-class discussion task, the instructor summarizes the material. Mori's (2018) analysis of flipped lessons found that "teaching after learning" increased the effectiveness of lessons. The instructor's summary can allow learners to reconstruct their initial understanding into deeper understanding, along with giving authority to things learned individually or by peer instruction.

Reflection and deeper application tasks

Following the in-class discussion and instructor's summary learners can gain from a reflection assignment or writing assignment that requires even further processing of the discussion topic.

Flipped Lesson Examples

The following flipped lessons were created and implemented for first-year classes at a regional public university in Japan. The English abilities of students who enter this university range from CEFR A1 to B2+; however, most students are approximately at the CEFR A2+ and CEFR B1 levels. This band of abilities is similar to the EFL population at many Japanese tertiary educational institutions; thus, the authors of this paper believe that the following three lesson examples might be useful in various Japanese EFL contexts.

Lesson 1: Learning from Discussion Models

Pre-discussion Preparation

At the first stage of internalizing knowledge, students watched two videos, one modeling "bad discussion" and the other modelling "good discussion." These videos were developed by the authors and their colleagues, who played character roles in the videos. The idea behind providing the videos was for students to focus on the positive and negative formal features of discussions, rather than difficult content, so both videos featured a simple topic: ice cream. These videos were embedded in a Microsoft Form. Students answered questions based on their analysis of the videos. The "bad discussion" featured disengaged participants, mobile phone usage during discussion, non-sequitur replies, and a one-by-one order in which each person said their opinion before the conversation moved to the next person. The "good discussion" included organic

conversation in which all participants were engaged and added information and opinions based on what other people had said. We refer to this notion as “connecting and adding.” Before watching the videos, students wrote a definition of discussion. Students then identified good and bad points of the videos, and finally answered a question about how their understanding of discussion had changed after watching.

Collaborative Tasks

At the group stage of verbalizing knowledge, students shared observations about good and bad discussion practices and wrote a group definition of discussion. After making this definition, student groups engaged in simple discussions similar to the ones in the videos watched outside of class. Students recorded these discussions and played the recordings back, analyzing their discussions by writing good and bad points in two columns. Student groups shared their findings with the class, and the instructor summarized the students’ responses and offered this definition of discussion for comparison: “Discussion is two or more people exchanging ideas on a topic resulting in understanding the topic and each other better.” The instructor highlighted that good discussions occur when participants connect to others’ ideas and add their own information and opinions.

Reflection

Finally, at the individual stage of re-internalizing knowledge, students analyzed the script from the good discussion video in order to diagram the various incidences of connecting and adding. Through this activity students reflected on what they had discovered about good discussion, which likely helped students to internalize their understanding of good discussion practices.

Lesson 2: Learning with L1 Pre-Discussion Materials

Pre-discussion Preparation

A textbook reading referred to different kinds of on-line advertising and whether it helps consumers. The instructors thought that many learners might have limited background knowledge to understand the reading, and thus would not be able to discuss the topic. Thus, for time efficiency and to ensure that the learners understood the mechanisms behind on-line advertisements, L1 (Japanese) YouTube videos teaching two kinds of on-line advertising were selected as first-exposure material to internalize knowledge. The learners were assigned to watch five minutes of either “A video” or “B video” and to write a summary in English of the two different kinds of on-line advertising.

Collaborative Close-ended Tasks

In the following class, learners who had watched “A video” talked with each other and checked that their summaries were correct. Those who had watched “B video” did the same. Next, a person who had watched “A” paired with a person who had watched “B” and they described in English what they had learned. All the learners did the before-class preparation study, knowing that they would need to prove completion in the next class. With this newly acquired background knowledge about different types of on-line advertising, the learners were more likely to be able to engage with the textbook reading.

Deeper Application Task

In a subsequent discussion, students took on roles of consumers or shop owners and demonstrated their ability to talk about different kinds of on-line advertising from the perspective of the roles that they were playing. L1 pre-class materials proved to be an efficient and effective way to ensure learners gain the knowledge that they need to participate in L2 group discussion.

Lesson 3: Two Flipped Activities Before Discussion

The following lesson repeats the pre-class study and in-class collaborative tasks twice in order to prepare learners for a difficult discussion topic: artificial intelligence (AI) and job loss. The topic was introduced in the textbook and supplemented with a TED Talk by Noriko Arai entitled, “Can a robot pass a university entrance exam?”

Pre-discussion Preparation

The individual internalizing of knowledge occurred with the first-exposure material that included an English news article reporting on Arai’s talk. The article summarized the main point of the TED Talk, allowing learners to acquire background information at their own pace. To prepare for the group stage of this series of lessons, learners read the news article and answered closed-ended comprehension questions. They also searched for biographical information about Arai in English or Japanese which was an open-ended task.

Collaborative Tasks

In the next class learners used these comprehension questions in a small group discussion to verbalize their new knowledge. Groups also shared information that they had found about Arai with the class.

Pre-discussion Preparation

To deepen their knowledge of the topic, the learners were given a second flipped lesson to prepare for group discussion. Again, at the individual stage, learners watched the 13-minute-minute Arai TED Talk, answered comprehension questions, and formulated their opinions on AI and job loss.

Collaborative Task/Deeper Application Task

In the following class there were small group discussions on the topic of AI and job loss. Students were able to discuss pros and cons of AI in society and add information from Arai’s presentation. Students could talk based on their experience of the Japanese education system and give their opinions on education considering the increase of AI.

Feedback from Learners

In the above lesson related to AI and job loss, learners commented that the pace of the TED Talk was challenging for them, but the structure of the activity allowed for individualized learning. Because they were able to watch the TED Talk repeatedly, at their pace, they were able to understand the content.

Additional feedback from other learners regarding flipped classroom design was collected during Lesson 1: Learning from Discussion Models. Students indicated

that their understanding of discussion changed. For example, one student wrote, “My understanding of [discussion] changed. I thought talking is a discussion. But listening is also discussion. And I think natural reaction and follow-up question are important for discussion.” Another student answered, “My understanding of discussion changed. I understand it is important not only to express my opinion but also to understand by listening to the opinions of others.”

Conclusion

Although the flipped classroom is commonly associated with STEM subjects, our experiences show that the flipped classroom can also play an important role in foreign language classes. This is particularly true in the Japanese university context since discussion of academic topics, including expressing and responding to the opinions of others, is not a skill that most Japanese students have when they enter university. In this paper we reported on the use of flipped classroom design in English language classes in order to promote higher level small group discussion skills. Using three sample lessons as a demonstration of flipped classroom design in action, we have shown that it is both applicable to and effective in the English-language classroom.

Flipped classroom design provides students with time to learn background knowledge and vocabulary, and to formulate their opinions, a necessary part of preparing learners to discuss academic topics effectively.

Feedback from students, although not gathered systematically, indicated that students demonstrated new procedural knowledge as a result of flipped classroom design and that they reacted positively to this new pedagogical approach. While the positive reaction of the students is an important indicator, as language instructors, the concrete language development of our learners, such the fluency, accuracy and complexity of their language use should be the primary focus of research. Future studies should therefore compare the language use and language growth of Japanese EFL learners in classes using flipped classroom design with those in more traditional pedagogical settings.

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Bio Data

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Self-efficacy and IELTS: A Case of EAP Learners in Japan¹

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Abstract

Self-efficacy is concerned with the judgments of self-perceptions of the ability to accomplish tasks (Bandura, 1982), and in language learning its importance is due to its connection with motivation, commitment, and self-regulation of language learning strategies (Wang et al., 2014). High self-efficacy is also linked to lower anxiety and, in addition, academic success (Horwitz, 2001; Mills, 2014). In this quantitative study, a Japanese version of the Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (QESE) (Wang, 2004) translated by the researchers, and learners' self-reported self-efficacy were recorded. This study looked at the translation and use of the Japanese version of the QESE and the data gathered from it in relation to IELTS academic performance. Data shows self-efficacy is only partially correlated with performance on the IELTS academic test. The results suggest important pedagogical implications related to feedback during IELTS preparation courses.

自己効力という概念は、ある行動（タスク）を達成できるかという自分自身の判断が関連している（Bandura, 1982）。言語習得における自己効力感の重要性は、その動機とコミットメント、自己調節した言語学習ストラテジーに関連していることに起因している（Wang et al., 2014）。また、高い自己効力感は、不安感の低下に加え学術的な成功にも関連している（Horwitz, 2001; Mills, 2014）。本研究は私たちが日本語に翻訳した Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (QESE)(Wang, 2004)を利用し、学習者の自己報告の自己効力感について記録した。従って、本研究は日本語に翻訳された QESE を使用し、そこから記録した自己効力データと IELTS の学業成績（パフォーマンス）データの関連を調査した。調査の結果、自己効力感と IELTS パフォーマンスは部分的に相関していることが見出された。本研究の結果は、IELTS 準備コースのフィードバックに関する重要な教育的意義を示唆している。

Keywords: Self-Efficacy, Second Language Acquisition, IELTS, Language Testing,

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Student's beliefs in their own language abilities can be one of the major factors in determining success in their studies, in how their performance manifests in the classroom and in evaluative instruments. The effects of self-efficacy can be seen not only in performance in formal test environments, as well as in how students perform in the classroom, and their ability to participate relative to their capacity and with their classmates. As language learning differs from the learning in other areas (Williams, 1994), language production is heavily dependent on students' sense of self-efficacy which relates to active participation and communication in the target language. Therefore, the study of self-efficacy and its connection with language study is of the utmost importance (Raofi et al., 2012).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy of students can be a predicting factor to success in learning in numerous situations, including education (Bandura, 1984). One of the primary researchers of self-efficacy in its early stages, Albert Bandura, defined self-efficacy as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute a course of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p.3). Bandura (1978) identified four sources related to self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Past successful performances tend to be associated with a higher sense of self-efficacy, which becomes vital in developing self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy has been found to be predictive of academic success, the successful use of learning strategies, and through relationships with a variety of other affective factors (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura (1984) believed that successes raise efficacy while failures lowered it. Not only this, but the way in which success occurs is also tied to self-efficacy. Effort plays a key role in self-efficacy in a variety of ways (Nicholls & Miller, 1984). In this way, self-efficacy related to language learning has supported this relationship with language proficiency in previous studies (Hsieh & Kang, 2010; Hsieh & Schallert, 2008). Furthermore, learners who attribute their failures to lack of effort generally had higher proficiency than those who did not, and did not suffer losses in self-efficacy. Moreover, learners who attributed learning motivation to internal attributes, not only had higher self-efficacy but also had higher performance (Hsieh & Kang, 2010). In educational settings, self-efficacy was shown to be associated with academic achievement, particularly concerning engagement in academic tasks (Lane & Lane, 2001). According to Schunk (1990), "students who hold low self-efficacy for learning may avoid tasks; those who judge themselves efficacious are more likely to participate" (p.74). As a consequence, learners with lower self-efficacy are more likely to generally avoid tasks and participate less in class.

These participation preferences associated with self-efficacy, such as avoiding participation or active learning, proactive behavior such as raising hands, or persistent engagement with academic tasks, shows a behavioral intention to interact which could indicate positive self-efficacy views and lead to more positive general academic outcomes (Schunk, 1981 & 1990) as well as in foreign language education (MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei & Noels, 1998; Mill, Pajares, & Herron, 2007; Wang, 2004).

Language Performance and Self-Efficacy

In self-efficacy research, there have been findings to suggest that self-efficacy is correlated with academic achievement outside of foreign language education (Huang & Chang, 1998; Jones, 2008). Thanks to these findings, researchers in second and foreign language education have become interested to see if this correlation between self-efficacy and academic achievement can be observed in areas of foreign language acquisition.

While it is difficult to say that extensive research has been undertaken to look at correlations in self-efficacy and academic achievement, quite a few studies have looked into the notion of self-efficacy in the field of foreign language acquisition. A relationship between these factors has been found across a variety of contexts. Mills, Pajares, & Herron (2006) found a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and reading and listening performance of female participants. This study highlights that self-efficacy can be a complex construct, finding mixed results when including gender as a variable. Another study by Li & Wang (2010) further supported the findings related to reading in the context of Chinese English learners. In this study, the researchers found that high self-efficacy was linked to higher use of various reading strategies has been linked to higher reading achievement (Phakiti, 2003).

Specific to the language context in our own study, Onoda (2013) found a significant relationship between vocabulary skills and self-efficacy with concerns to Japanese learners of English. This study reported that learners with higher self-efficacy had a higher level of proficiency in English vocabulary skills. One common trend appears to be a significant correlation when comparing self-efficacy and language proficiency levels of learners. (Tsai, 2013). Learners who have a wide range of self-regulating strategies tend to have higher self-efficacy and higher proficiency in their target second/foreign language.

Methodology

Research Questions

In this study, the researchers investigated how students perceived self-efficacy and potential ties to performance, in particular, an English proficiency test, and the IELTS academic test. This research study posed three research questions:

Is the Japanese QESE translated for this study equivocally reliable as other versions of the QESE?

Is self-efficacy and performance on the IELTS correlated?

If so, in what ways is self-efficacy and performance on tests correlated in a foreign language context?

Participants

The participants of this study were 50 first-year university students at a small private university in Japan. The participants predominantly consisted of female learners, 42 females and 8 males. The students who participated in this study are first-year students in the Department of Humanities. This department, which opened in 2016, focuses on the development of English proficiency during the students' first year at the university. At the end of the first year, these students go abroad to various universities around the world to study. While a large percent of these students attend primarily English courses while abroad, a few are eligible to study content courses with local students in academic

courses. To determine which course they are eligible for, the students must take the academic IELTS (International English Language Testing System) test. At the time of this research, students took five required English classes twice a week for a total of 15 hours of English related in-class coursework per week.

Measurement

In the case of self-efficacy, the researchers took an already established self-efficacy questionnaire, the QESE, designed by Wang (2004) as part of his doctoral dissertation. This questionnaire was used in this study due to its high reliability amongst different languages in regards English education. In addition, it is one of few that is primarily concerned with English self-efficacy in Asian EFL contexts (Kim, Wang, Ahn, Bonh, 2015; Kitikanan, & Sasimonton, 2017; Ngoc Truong & Wang, 2019; Wang, Kim, Bai, & Hu, 2014; Wang, Schwab, Fenn, & Chang, 2013). The QESE is a 32 question 7-point Likert scales in which a high score indicates a high self-efficacy. The researchers then translated this into Japanese and made adjustments to ease understanding for the participants and to try to make the test linguistically and culturally appropriate. Finally, the questionnaire was proofread by native speakers of Japanese and pilot-tested to evaluate comprehensibility (Appendix A). Total self-efficacy scores were recorded by adding the scores of all 31 questions of the Japanese QESE. In addition to total scores, the QESE can be divided by language domains; reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Scores were totaled for each of these language domains as well.

During the translation process, changes were made to some of the measurement to make it more contextual for the participants of this study (Table 1).

Table 1
Key Changes to the QESE

Question	Change	Rationale
3	American TV shows → 英語のテレビ番組 (English Language TV Programs)	Changed as a way to ease understanding and answering of the question.
7	text in English → 英語のショートメール (English short-mail - the Japanese term for texting phone-to-phone)	Consulted young native Japanese speakers concerning the use of this item to make sure that it could be understood by college-aged people.
10	Question eliminated	Eliminated due to unfamiliarity with the content by researchers and the perceived unfamiliarity from the learners.
26	English-English dictionaries → 単語辞書 (word/vocabulary dictionaries)	Due to the learners' unfamiliarity with using English-English dictionaries at the time, the researchers were wary of using that term and instead adopted the use of "word dictionaries" keeping the type of dictionary ambiguous.

Regardless of the changes made in the Japanese translations, the version of the QESE developed by the researchers used in this study was found to be very reliable according to Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha= 0.96$). Table 2 compares the reliability score of the Japanese QESE to those of other versions of the QESE.

Table 2
Reliability Cronbach Alpha

Study	Alpha Result
This study	.964
Wang, Wang, & Li (2007)	.96
Wang, Hu, Zhang, Chang, & Xu (2012)	.97
Wang, Kim, Bong, & Ahn (2013)	.99
Wang, Schwab, Fenn, & Chang (2013)	.96
Kim, Wang, Ahn, & Bong (2015)	.99

The performance measurement used in this study the IELTS academic test conducted in August of 2018. The IELTS, jointly owned by the British Council, IDP Education, and Cambridge Assessment English, is a comprehensive four skills test of general and academic English (“About Us”, 2019). This test is a requirement for all first-year students in the Department of Humanities to evaluate where they qualify to study abroad and for which coursework, English program or content courses. The IELTS is scored independently on reading, writing, listening and speaking by bands 1-9 with a possibility of scores to the 0.5 level. The scores on these four sections are then averaged and rounded to the nearest 0.5 score. However, in this study, we averaged the score across all four skills and used the unrounded score values to assess proficiency.

Procedures

The IELTS was taken in August 2018 after the end of the university semester, during summer break (8/18/2018). This performance measurement was completed at the university. Results of this test were given two weeks after the test was administered. In the case of the self-efficacy measurement, this was performed in early November 2018. The Japanese QESE survey (see Appendix A) was given to students at the beginning of regular lessons or outside of the classroom within the course of approximately two weeks. The students were previously informed that they would be completing a questionnaire during this time in which consent for participation was collected.

Results

Correlations

Some correlations were observed during this study relating to IELTS performance scores and self-efficacy scores. All correlations were measured using a Pearson correlations which reported correlations between IELTS and self-efficacy. In addition,

correlation scores were observed looking at individual academic performance of skill sets in language learning; reading, listening, writing, and speaking, and self-efficacy of those same domains. There were no issues with the Japanese QESE reliability score as it was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha=0.96$). In fact, all parts based on language domains of the Japanese QESE were found to be highly reliable: listening ($\alpha=0.82$), speaking ($\alpha=0.90$), writing ($\alpha=0.93$), and reading ($\alpha=0.86$). Table 3 suggests that a medium positive correlation was found in regards to overall IELTS scores and overall self-efficacy scores ($r=0.465$; $p<0.01$). However, when observing differences in skills, only listening ($r=0.494$; $p<0.01$), and reading ($r=0.285$; $p=0.045$) were both found to be significant. Listening had a medium positive correlation, whereas, a small positive correlation was found with reading. Writing ($r=0.062$; $p=0.669$) and speaking ($r=0.280$; $p=0.058$) were both found to have no significant correlations with self-efficacy. This means that the receptive language domains, listening and reading, were found to have significant correlations with self-efficacy in those skills, and the productive language domains, writing and speaking, were not significantly correlated.

Table 3
Paired Samples Correlations

Performance and Self-Efficacy	N	Correlation	Sig.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Listening Performance	50	.494	.000**	4.990	0.549
Self-Efficacy				3.934	0.686
Speaking Performance	50	.270	.058	4.840	0.681
Self-Efficacy				4.353	0.763
Writing Performance	50	.062	.669	5.150	0.368
Self-Efficacy				4.348	0.800
Reading Performance	50	.285	.045*	5.020	0.580
Self-Efficacy				4.498	0.695
Total Performance	50	.465	.001**	5.000	0.362
Self-Efficacy				4.294	0.684

High vs. Low IELTS Scores and Self-Efficacy

In addition, when looking at the top fifteen IELTS performing students versus the bottom sixteen, highlighted in Table 4.1, a significant observation can be made. The groups were chosen by their IELTS scores, the top group ($n=15$) had scores exceeding 5.25 and the bottom group ($n=16$) had scores below 4.7 on their overall IELTS means scores. Using an independent samples t-test, a significant difference was discovered

between these two groups in relation to self-efficacy as presented in Table 4.2. The top group had a higher self-efficacy reported score (M=4.68) than the bottom performing group (M= 3.98). The result of a t-test defined this separation in self-efficacy when examining the mean results of the QESE of the top-level scorers on the IELTS and the bottom level to be significant (p=0.003, d=1.23

Table 4.1
Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
QESE	Top	15	4.68	.731	.189
	Bottom	16	3.982	.329	.082

Table 4.2
Independent Samples t-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	QESE	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed	9.707	.004	3.488	29	.002	.702	.201	.290	1.114
	Equal variances not assumed			3.412	19.174	.003	.702	.206	.272	1.132

Discussion

To reiterate, the primary goal of this inquiry was to determine potential correlations and connections between self-assessed measures of self-efficacy and the reliability of the translated measurement, and the objective measures of the IELTS academic language

testing system. Both the QESE and the IELTS testing system assess listening, speaking, reading and writing self-efficacy and performance, respectively.

QESE Reliability

First off, with consideration to the reliability of this QESE translations, similar reliability scores were found across previous studies which utilized the QESE, including the current study. The reliability of this self-efficacy measurement shows its viability to be transferred across multiple languages in relation to English efficacy.

Effects of Self-Efficacy

Measures of self-efficacy were fairly high, with both the high and low groups ranging from 5.5 and 4.5 out of a 7-point Likert scale, although there was a 1.0 gap between the high and low groups, which shows a significant difference in perception in self-efficacy among these groups as previously reported by Tsai (2013). Furthermore, there was a statistically significant difference in language domain performance scores which are measured by the IELTS testing system on two of the language domains, listening and reading in mean QESE scores when comparing the high and low proficiency groups.

Language Domains

Concerning the performance of students across domains of language, self-efficacy was shown to be an indicator of performance concerning receptive skills, reading and listening IELTS scores, and was most significant when concerning listening. These findings may suggest a relationship between self-efficacy and performance as proposed by previous studies on these skills (Li & Wang, 2010; Mills et al., 2006). However, concerning the productive domains of language, speaking and writing, these performance measures did not show significant correlations with the related self-efficacy measurement scores. While speaking was nearly significant ($p=0.058$), writing was not near significant ($p=0.669$) and with a very low correlation ($r=0.062$).

Implications and Limitations

Pedagogical implications

There are several implications for language education and the language classroom that can be drawn from these results. Potential implications of these findings include self-efficacy and its relations to predictive skills, or may point to potential areas that students need to improve upon.

Students may not be able to accurately measure their abilities in the productive skills of writing and speaking compared to receptive skills such as listening and reading. Assessing productive language skills in foreign language classrooms is a much more difficult task for language learners. Considering this, teachers should create feedback protocols to better aid learners in understanding their second language production abilities. Especially in the case of learners in this study, IELTS measurements for reading and listening are more objective and can often be measured on a correct or incorrect basis, while speaking and writing have guidelines but are subject to more subjective evaluation. These findings strengthen the arguments made in Onoda (2013), who found self-efficacy and vocabulary to have a positive correlation. As vocabulary knowledge is a major factor in receptive skills, the positive relationship between receptive skills and vocabulary acquisition may be noteworthy.

These implications may also be connected with the nature of classroom instruction that is common in Japan - as receptive skills are more likely to be taught and teacher-centered classrooms are more common, students will have a greater grasp over their own abilities concerning the passive skills (Nishino & Watanabe, 2008). Concerning the productive skills, which students have less experience with both classroom instruction and experience with exams, they may not be able to connect their self-efficacy in overall language skills with their performance in the productive skills test. Unlike other studies regarding self-efficacy and acting on self-efficacy beliefs in the language classroom through behaviors such as active participation, hand raising or avoiding conversation or difficult problems that may lead to loss of face (MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei & Noels, 1998; Schunk, 1981, 1990; Wang, 2004), despite the relatively high self-efficacy reported in these classes, classroom behaviors were not chronicled but could be another potential avenue for future research.

Extending these implications to the language classroom, the strength students have in connecting their self-efficacy to that of their receptive language skills may be representative of the fact that students have much more experience with the expectations of tests and evaluative measures, but concerning productive skills, students are not aware of the common expectations of productive skills, and need more exposure to the expectations of formal exams that require displaying their productive knowledge. Productive skills have, of course, traditionally been the more challenging skills to acquire for passive learners of a language, and without engagement in communicative or task-based language teaching or negotiation of meaning with other learners or speakers of the language, their self-efficacy, be it high or low, may not be an accurate predictor of their productive skills. Therefore, more active language learning opportunities and learning opportunities should be offered, not just in a formal educational setting, but also in extracurricular activities and interactive classrooms.

Conclusion

Overall, in the present study we conducted both a measure of students' self-efficacy compared with their performance on IELTS in productive and receptive skills. Self-efficacy scores were shown to be significant predictors of listening skills, and a minor predictor of reading skills but was not an indicator of the other productive skills. This gap between productive and receptive skills in light of the IELTS achievement test may be due to the fact that students have less experience with tests that measure productive skills.

One notable conclusion to draw from this research is that students have traditionally had less experience with productive language use, and subsequent measures of these language areas. More exposure to one-on-one writing evaluations, interviews and student presentations may provide students with the feedback that they need to gain a realistic expectation of their skills in light of formal assessments. Participation in active learning environments in the language classroom and productive language use with proficient speakers of English and highly experienced teachers can help to facilitate better calibration of students' own expectations of their abilities respective of their judgments of their self-efficacy.

Limitations

Though the results of this study have shown significant findings, some limitations should be acknowledged. One such limitation is the use of a self-reported questionnaire as a measurement of self-efficacy, despite the implementation of the IELTS as an objective measure of performance. This alone may not accurately record the participants' real perceptions and may benefit from being coupled with a mixed-method data collection methodology.

Another limitation of this study is the long gap between the performance data collection and the self-efficacy measurement. One possible suggestion for future studies in this regard is to lessen the time between measurements. In addition, it is possible that the reports of self-efficacy may differ if collected prior to the IELTS. Though the QESE is not directly related to the IELTS, some variance may occur when concerned with the time between measurements. While in this study, this may have not been a significant limitation, it would be interesting to measure efficacy before the performance measurement.

Regarding the self-efficacy measurement, the researchers slightly altered the translation of the QESE to better adapt it to the participants in this study. Due to the topic of self-efficacy, some translations were changed to be more familiar with regards to what the learners have experienced in their education. Along with this, there may need to be more adaptations to better consider cultural differences or even the development of a new scale that specifically aims more at academic self-efficacy in English. The QESE is not concerned with a lot of issues faced in academic English learners which include summarizing charts, or writing about complex sociopolitical issues. Adapting the QESE, to reflect more academic performance measurements, like the IELTS, could aid in strengthening the outcomes of the study.

Suggestions for Future Research

Concerning future directions, this research project will also include a post-test of self-efficacy and performance as the participants continue their university studies, in order to observe further changes in self-efficacy. QESE questions will continue to be revised as necessary, in regard to the appropriateness of the questions. This project also consists of looking at these factors in relation to another affective factor, foreign language anxiety. In addition, between two experimental sessions, the participants will have studied abroad which is another factor to examine.

Bio Data

Nicholas Marx is a part-time English instructor and international staff at Kanazawa Seiryō University teaching students English in the Department of Humanities and the Department of Economics. His research interests are primarily in affective factors, in particular, self-efficacy and anxiety. He is also interested in task-based language teaching and currently acts as the public relations chair of the TBLT SIG of JALT.

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Appendix A

Self-Efficacy Scale (adapted from Wang, et al. 2014).

以下の質問をよく読んで、現在の英語のコマンドを正確に評価してください。これらの質問は、あなたの能力の判断を測るために設計されているので、正しいか間違った答えはありません。名前を書いてはいけませんが、すべての質問に答え、学生番号を書き留めてください。

これらの質問に応じて以下のスケールを使用してください。あなたの能力を正確に表す数字を選んでください。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 全然できません。できません。多分できません。多分できます。大体できます。できます。上手にできます。

1. 英語で語った物語を理解することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. 英語のテキストを使用する宿題を一人でできるか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. 英語のテレビ番組・プログラムを理解することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. 自分の大学について英語で説明することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. インターネットのサイトや掲示板に英語で投稿ができますか。(Facebook, twitter, blogs, etc.)?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. 家から大学までの道案内は英語でできますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. 英語のショートメール (SNS メッセージ) を書くことができますか。(Line, Facebook messenger, twitter DM)?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. 英語で物語を語るすることができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. 英語を公用語としている国のラジオ番組を理解することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. 英語でメモを書き残すことができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. 英語のテキストの分からない言葉の意味を推測することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. あなたは今学んだ英単語から新しい文章を作ることができますか?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. 英語でe-メールを書くことができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. 学生生活についての英語会話 (録音したもの) を理解することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. インターネットの英語のメッセージやニュースを理解することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. 先生に英語で質問することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. 英語のイディオム (熟語) を使って文章を作ることができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. 先生を英語で誰かに紹介することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. クラスメイトと一般的な話題を英語で話し合うことができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. 短い英語の物語を読むことができますか?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21. 字幕つけなくても英語の映画を理解することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22. 先生の英語の質問は英語で答えることができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23. 英語の歌を理解することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24. 英字新聞を理解することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25. 単語辞書を使って新しい単語の意味を調べることはできますか?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26. 英語での電話番号を理解することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27. 英語で日記を書くことができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28. 日本の文化に関する英語の記事を理解できますか?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
29. 自己紹介を英語でできますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
30. 知っている有名人についての2ページのレポートを英語で書くことができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
31. 指導者によって選ばれた新しい英語のリーディング教材を理解することができますか。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Closing Gaps in Inclusive Support in Japanese Tertiary Education¹

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Abstract

As the number and variety of students with Special Learning Differences (SpLD) is increasing in tertiary education in Japan, the need for inclusion and accommodation becomes more apparent and necessary, especially in classes that require learners to interact, collaborate and communicate with each other. In this paper, the authors explore the theoretical background of government policies related to inclusive education, existing research on SpLD, and point out the gaps in the literature as the first part of their joint-research on students with SpLD and their support systems in the tertiary EFL classrooms in Japan.

学習の特性 (SpLD、Special Learning Differences) を持つ生徒・学生が高等教育の現場でも増加し、大学でも包括性と配慮の必要性はより重要になりつつある。特に必修科目でありながら共同学習やコミュニケーションが必要である言語の科目では SpLD の特性を持つ学生がより目立ってしまったり困難を抱えてしまったりする傾向にある。この論文ではインクルーシブ教育を目指すという政府の方針を探り、SpLD に関する先行研究と研究が不足している部分を探る。この論文は、SpLD の特性を持つ学生を対象とし、大学教育における外国語のクラスの支援システムの構築に関する共同研究報告となる前半の部分に当たる。

Keywords: Special Learning Differences (SpLD), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction

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As numbers of students with disabilities, including Special Learning Differences (SpLD) is increasing in Japan in all levels of education (Center for Diversity Accessibility and Career Development, University of Tsukuba, 2017; Tsukuba Accessibility Department, 2017), teachers need to be aware of different teaching techniques, such as differentiated instruction, to help learners communicate and collaborate. This paper gives insight into the history of SpLD in Japan, current practices being employed, and discussion on how change is possible in the classroom through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction.

In most parts of the world as recently as the 20th century, children showing any major atypical physical or mental development were not allowed to attend schools and were excluded from society (LePole, n.d.). In Japan, there were many children with disabilities who were refused the right to attend regular or special schools until special schools were made mandatory (Watanabe, Suzuki, & Takahashi, 2017). Perhaps following the lead of its European counterparts (Department of Education and Science, 2007) or the UN mandates in 1975 to assure the equal rights of people with any disability (United Nations, 2003), the Japanese government made it mandatory in 1979 to provide integrated education to children with special needs (Yamaguchi, 2005), these classes were established within mainstream schools. Takahashi (2017) explained that the idea behind the development of such options came with the concept of normalization of people with handicaps, meaning that those with special needs have to be given opportunities to live in normal living conditions.

The Ordinance for Enforcement of the School Education Act in 1993 stipulated the *tsuukyu* (commute between two classes) scheme. This scheme allows children requiring special attention to spend most of their time in regular classes but also have several hours of additional personal or small-group lessons a week to cater to individual needs (Isogai, 2017). At this time of educational reform, the concept of normalization was skewed and executed so as to make the special educational needs children to fit into the mainstream, and to be as "normal" as possible (Takahashi, 2017). Since the 2011 revisions to the Basic Act for Persons with Disabilities, the Japanese government has been enforcing equal educational opportunities, ensuring an inclusive educational environment for all children (Matamura, 2013). The ideology of inclusive education does not dichotomize any individual into either a mainstream or a special education class, but looks at the learner's differences on a spectrum and recognizes that all children are unique and diverse.

In this paper, the authors focus on identifying available support, and its insufficiency for those who show any differences or difficulties with particular aspects of learning in tertiary education. The term "Specific Learning Differences" (SpLD) will be used throughout this document. The most common SpLD stem from identified learning disorders or developmental conditions as presented in Table 1.

All SpLD exist on a continuum from mild to moderate to severe. Common patterns of behavior and experience do exist but there is a range of different effect patterns for each individual. SpLD are independent of intellectual ability, socio-economic or language background.

While diagnosed SpLD students are identifiable, there are many that fall into what is called "*gurei zo-n*", or hereafter "gray zone". The gray zone in Japanese as described by Himeno (2018) is a person who sits between the black and white extremes of an ability spectrum, and has some degree of learning difficulty. Those with an official diagnosis on any of the aforementioned learning disorders, are considered "tested positive" and often referred to in Japan as "marked black". Persons with typical development and without any challenges are "tested negative" and

referred to as "marked white". Those who belong to the gray zone may or may not be aware of their own learning difficulties. Himeno also states the population of people in the gray zone is thought to be larger than the population of people with an official diagnosis.

Table 1
Learning Disorders and Developmental Conditions

	Type	Name
Learning Disorders	reading	dyslexia
	writing	dysgraphia
	arithmetic	dyscalculia
Developmental Conditions	coordination	dyspraxia
	sensory input/ perception	autistic spectrum disorder
	focus and self-control	attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

Note. Adapted from Lewisham Virtual School (2019)

From Policy to Practice: Gaps in Japanese Education

The Ministry of Education and Sports, Science and Technology's (MEXT) ideology of ensuring inclusive education for all seems feasible, but its implementation may not be as impressive. According to a 2016 MEXT report, as of 2014 May, out of the 10.19 million students enrolled in compulsory education, about 69,000 students (0.67%) belong to schools for special needs education, about 187,000 learners (1.84%) attend classes for special needs education of public elementary and junior high schools, and 84,000 students (0.82%) go to special support services in resource rooms. The same report also highlights plans and suggested systems to improve the support provided for learners with physical and developmental disabilities. The 2019 MEXT report for learner needs appears to prompt institutions to radically transform towards the recognition of general diversity, but it appears to be a written policy with no actual enforcement power. The 2019 MEXT report states in Article 24 on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an inclusive education system does not exclude persons with disabilities from the general education system. (Section 1.1, point 2). Furthermore, it explains the necessity of providing various types of schools and classes to accommodate students with different abilities as connecting diverse environments of learning. (Section 1.1 point 4)

However, Mithout (2016) questions whether the creation of these new systems to cater to learner needs really prompts institutions to radically transform towards the recognition of general diversity or is it merely words and no action. Takahashi (2017) concurs with Mithout that while the inclusive education ideologies proposed by MEXT are sound on the surface, in reality, the institutions and their practices have not yet changed from the integrational educational practices.

In addition to this, recent MEXT reports (Isogai, 2017; MEXT, 2016) only focus on plans and efforts directed for learners in primary and secondary schools, showing a lack of discussion or concern for learners with SpLD in tertiary education. For those students who want to pursue

higher education, an earlier MEXT report on Higher Education (2012) provides ample guidelines and support systems on the tertiary entrance process, in accordance with constitutional rights that “shall be entitled to equal opportunities to receive education in accordance with concerned laws and according to his or her ability” (p. 2). Despite this, there is no discussion on considerations for students with SpLD once they have entered tertiary education, nor guidelines for institutions that receive these students. Perhaps there is an assumption that after completing their high school education, students with SpLD will get trained at vocational schools or start working immediately, rather than pursuing their studies in the mainstream tertiary system. However, the percentage of Japanese high school students with diagnosed SpLD proceeding to higher education (81.5%) marked the highest in history in the year 2018 (MEXT, 2018). This increase of tertiary enrollees with SpLD corroborates the authors’ personal observations working within the Japanese private tertiary system over the last five years. The Student Support Center at their institution reports that 68 out of 633 registered students in 2018 are either officially diagnosed with disability, undiagnosed but with SpLD with accommodation requests, or “gray zone” learners (Seino, I. personal communication, May 21, 2019). If these students’ educational experience prior to college and university did not include full integration or inclusion within mainstream education, transitioning from a closed environment into mainstream university classes, where self-management, independent learning, and adequate academic skills are expected, can be quite challenging for both the student and the teacher.

College Education and Learners with SpLD

The JASSO 2018 report describes the rapid increase of student numbers with invisible disabilities, such as developmental disabilities, mental issues, and physical weakness and sickness. It states that 1.05% of students enrolled in higher education are classified as disabled students. Compared to a smaller difference of .26% over a 7-year period from 2006 (0.16%) to 2013 (0.42%), the following five years, 2013 to 2018, saw a bigger increase of .63%. With the implementation of the Act for Eliminating Discrimination Against People with Disabilities, by law, all public schools have to provide “reasonable accommodation” if requested by students, and all private schools have to “try” to provide accommodations if requested by students (Japan Cabinet Office, 2016). Students with Learning Differences with or without an official diagnosis may request “reasonable accommodation” from the institution they are registered in.

Prominent Issues Emerging in Language Classrooms and with Language Teachers

As the number of students who require special support is increasing at the tertiary education level, the variety of student needs and accommodations being requested is also rising. This surge is significantly felt in core curriculum English classes at the authors’ institution, where first year students are required to complete mandatory subjects.

The challenges experienced by the authors of this paper are not necessarily with how to provide for individual accommodation requests, but the uncertainty of how to assist students who are in the gray zone. These students, seemingly coping, may have difficulties related to undiagnosed SpLD. As these students have not been diagnosed nor given training to handle their specific needs, they often have difficulties in; managing time, following coordinated classes taught by different teachers, multi-tasking, asking for help or talking to people in general. Having been accustomed to set educational structures, procedures, and available support systems in middle and high school, the new status quo of tertiary education can be quite jarring for learners with SpLD. As such, these learners have no choice but to learn how to navigate and

survive mainstream education, even if their learnt skills are not sufficient in the new, less-sheltered university environment where independence and learner initiative are encouraged.

Tertiary teachers are not only responsible for the content of their classes, but also the learning environment, including providing accommodations to learners with SpLD. However, the lack of training to instruct and accommodate these types of learners makes the expectation less feasible. This is especially challenging in language classrooms where there are many foreign instructors who may or may not have sufficient ability to comprehend or communicate in Japanese. Examples of instructor difficulties include understanding some or all of the following: institutional policies, the teacher's guidebook if available, or even specific accommodation requests sent directly to the individual teacher. A clear example of limited foreign language support is the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO, 2019); who provide extensive guidelines on supporting students with disabilities for faculty and staff, but only in Japanese. Although there is little institutional help from MEXT for teaching students with SpLD, there is literature support for students (Ishii, Ikeshima, & Takahashi, 2017; Takaishi & Iwata, 2012; Takahashi, 2012; Sasaki & Umenaga, 2010). Unfortunately, these again are only in Japanese. With limited Japanese language proficiency on the teacher's side, gathering information and communication with the students, their advisors and parents, and the counselor's/ school social workers are difficult to manage.

Apart from these difficulties that foreign language teachers experience, language classes often require students to actively communicate with peers and with the teacher in charge. These classrooms can exacerbate some students' SpLD, as they are unable to remove themselves from various situations that trigger stress points.

For students with or without any type of learning difficulties to study in the same foreign language classroom, the first step of creating an inclusive learning environment is to ensure that social barriers, in other words difficulties that students with any disabilities would consider as obstacles, are eliminated. The next step is to provide any reasonable accommodations requested by the students and to cater to students' individual needs and differences (Nagasawa, 2018). Theoretically, by providing both a barrier-free environment and requested accommodation, all students can learn equally. Two possibilities for this are discussed in the following section.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction for Accessible Learning

One possible tool to aid learning in classrooms with SpLD students is Universal Design for Learning (UDL). As described in their more recent publication (Meyer, Rose & Gordon, 2014), Universal Design for Learning is a term coined by Rose and Meyer in the 1990s as an approach to curriculum that minimizes barriers and encourages maximum learning for all. Meyer et al. (2014) highlight the need for education to reshape the way teaching and learning take place. This educational innovation can occur by emphasizing flexibility and individuality. UDL's three principles can help meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities inherent in students' great variability, offering paths for those currently disenfranchised and developing everyone's talents by providing equal learning opportunities through ongoing monitoring, feedback, and course corrections.

While UDL has been at the forefront of providing the framework for lowering barriers and increasing access for learners, most studies focus on its application to learners in primary and lower-secondary education. Hazmi and Ahmad (2018), Rao, Smith, and Lowrey (2017), and Coyne, Pisham, Dalton, Zeph, and Cook Smith (2012) have highlighted how the adoption of

UDL in P-12 grade-level classrooms has provided greater language learning for those with SpLD. Application of UDL has also increased especially in Japanese elementary and junior high school instruction (Tanaka, 2017), and primary level of English instruction using universal design fonts and phonetic instruction (Ito & Kobayashi, 2011; Murakami, 2018; Murakami, 2019; Tejima, 2019; Tada, 2017). In these contexts, UDL is not utilized to reduce class expectations or to adopt instruction at the lowest common baseline. Instead, it is employed to improve accessibility and provide embedded support for all (Bracken & Novak, 2019; Torres, & Rao, 2019; Doran, 2015). Unfortunately, despite the success of UDL in pre-university education there is currently no research available on its use and application in Japanese tertiary institutions.

A second related approach useful for SpLD classrooms is differentiated instruction. Here, teachers are encouraged to find ways to address differences in students' learning according to their different needs, while still teaching the class as a whole. Examples of this include providing reading books of various levels, or providing subsets of issues so that students have the opportunity to research something of their own interest (Tomlinson, 2000). Several researchers have looked at differentiated instruction and how this approach impacts language learners in tertiary education. Despite difficulties in utilizing differentiated instruction in an introductory graduate education course, a study by Sanagelo and Tomlinson (2009), and later work by Dosh and Zidon (2014), found that differentiated instruction gave students the opportunity to acquire knowledge and understanding of course content and activities based upon their individual readiness, interests, and learning profiles. In Malaysia, Kamarulzaman, Azman, and Zahidi (2016) were able to integrate differentiated instruction strategies into EFL classes allowing students to access material through varied modes of context and processes. McCarty, Crow, Mims, Potthoff, and Harvey (2016) highlight the benefits of differentiated instruction strategies as they allow teachers to increase instructor response to learner needs. To accommodate and integrate learners with learning disabilities to multiple aspects of a lesson, Gibson (2017) suggests that teachers should adapt or modify differentiated instruction strategies in their classes. Unfortunately, despite these various accounts of how differentiated instruction can benefit learners, this is yet to be adapted in Japanese tertiary education classes.

Moving forward

The understanding and application of inclusive learning in Japan needs more attention than it currently receives. While educational institutions around the world are already acting on supporting learner differences based on their progressive policies, Japan is not able to put into practice what is recommended in their policies. In the process of seeking solutions to address these issues, closing gaps in existing research come to the forefront. Current research does not provide many solutions for all learners to adhere to the needs of Japanese tertiary education, especially in foreign language classes. More research is needed to find practical solutions for teachers of students with SpLD not only in foreign language classrooms, but in any classroom, especially in higher education.

Promoting students' independence and self-support, while exploring possibilities of UDL and differentiated instruction in tertiary EFL classrooms are tall tasks to undertake. However, if all stakeholders are made aware of their roles and the tools available to help remove barriers that prevent learning, facilitation towards a change of mindset, collaboration and cooperation are possible endeavors. At the tertiary level, for students with either diagnosed disabilities or those who belong to the gray zone, more work is needed to facilitate a smooth transition from high school, so that greater learning can occur.

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Biodata

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