

Explorations in Teacher Education

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Contents

2 And Now a Word from...The Editor

Simon Lees

Articles

3 Considering the Nontraditional Student in Teacher Education in Japan

Brian Rugen

10 Evaluating the intensive English language program at Portland State University: meeting student and business needs

Jason Krebs

32 An analysis of two students' writing portfolios

Takeshi Kamijo

43 Promoting EFL Learner and Teacher Autonomy through Action Research: A Case of Collaborative and Reflective Supervision

Hideo Kojima

55 Publishing Guidelines for *Explorations in Teacher Education*

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And Now a Word from...The Editor

Welcome to Volume 16, Issue 2, the Summer 2008 edition of Explorations in Teacher Education, the newsletter of the JALT Teacher Education Special Interest Group (TE SIG).

This issue we have four articles; one from Brian Rugen; another from Jason Krebs; one by Takeshi Kamijo and one by Hideo Kojima.

Again it is time for apologies to the membership. Usually I like to produce a Spring issue of the newsletter but as it has taken me so long to get this issue finished you are now reading the Summer edition. There was no Spring edition for 2008. Sorry about that. I must apologize to the contributors too, who have been waiting for quite some time for their articles to be published. Unfortunately I don't have any great excuses other than being busy with work.

I feel the membership should get some value for their money and to me that means I like to produce four issues of the newsletter a year. I could still do that this year with a pre-conference issue and some kind of end-of-year issue. However, aside from the problem of me getting my act together, that plan does face one other big problem: a lack of contributions. I'm hoping to get this published before the summer vacation begins (I'm writing this on July 26th) so hopefully this should provide some reading material over the summer. Who knows, perhaps some of you will be inspired to write!

In SIG news, Colin, our esteemed coordinator has recently redesigned the SIG webpage <<http://jalttesig.terapad.com/>> and has done rather a good job of it. The site is much improved. Thanks to Colin and well done! Back issues of the newsletter are available for download at the site.

Well, that's about it from me, hope you enjoy the issue.

Simon Lees

Editor

Considering the Nontraditional Student in Teacher Education in Japan

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Introduction

In this article, I would like to explore what I believe is a neglected aspect in English language teacher education in Japan: the growth in the number of nontraditional students enrolling in teacher education programs. I believe this is an important issue to consider as we strive to improve our methods for training English teachers amidst complex, contemporary issues surrounding English language education in Japan. I also suggest that narrative inquiry may provide one useful tool when working with increasingly diverse populations of teacher candidates.

Nontraditional teacher candidates

There are significant changes occurring in the field of English language teaching and learning in Japan at the moment. The media frequently reports on Japan's declining birthrate, and, as the birthrate continues to decline, so does the enrollment in institutes of higher education. In the past, colleges and universities in Japan have not been willing and/or able to make policy reforms because there has been no need to compete due to full enrollment. Today, colleges and universities have been willing to, indeed *must*, make policy reforms in order to compete. One of these policy reforms includes efforts to attract non-traditional students, or *shakaijinkeikensha*. Yamamoto, Fujitsuka, & Honda-Okitsu (2000) note: "Every element of the university system, teaching, student services, and so on, has been so focused on young people that Japan now needs to reorganize its system for ever-increasing numbers of non-traditional students" (p. 198-99). Although the term nontraditional student is subject to different interpretations, the term "tends to relate to older or adult students with a vocational training and work experience background, or other students with unconventional educational biographies" (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002, p. 313). For the purpose of this article, I follow Bray (1995), who defines nontraditional students as students 25 or over who are enrolled in a teacher preparation program, or students 25 or over, identified as career switchers, who have previously received a baccalaureate degree.

In Japan, there are an increasing number of these non-traditional students in higher education *and* teacher education programs, including programs for future secondary school English teachers. Despite reports that it may be getting more difficult for *all* students (both traditional and nontraditional) to get a teaching license (the MEXT seems to want to lengthen

the time for teacher training in teacher education programs, akin to the training for medical doctors), several reasons point to this increasing number of non-traditional students wanting to become teachers now. Professor Fujimoto of the Teacher Training Center at Keio University identifies three main reasons for this increase. First, there is a commonly held belief in Japan that first undergoing experience in society is a more attractive option than immediately entering the teaching profession (personal communication, July 3, 2007). In fact, in an interview taken from my dissertation research on Japanese pre-service teachers of English (JPTes), one nontraditional student explained her own desire to work in a company before becoming a teacher. The reason for this, she explained, was due to the fact that she had been "inside a school" from ages 6-22, and she wanted to "see and know another world" before going back to school and finishing the requirements for becoming a teacher ("Yuko," personal communication, May 26, 2007). In fact, this reflects the feelings of many traditional students now enrolled in teacher certification programs. Many of them have indicated their desire to work in a company before becoming a teacher.

Second, according to Fujimoto, for people in their 30's and 40's, the conditions for becoming a teacher when they were in college were difficult. Now, however, because of the mass retirement of the baby boomer generation, there is a teacher shortage, and it has become easier to become employed as a teacher. Many of those who wanted to become teachers right after graduation, but who were not able to do so, may be returning to teacher education programs (personal communication, July 3, 2007). A recent article in *The Yomiuri Shimbun* also suggests that a substantial number of teachers—all hired several years ago to cope with the children of baby boomers—will be retiring over the next 10 years ("Competition growing," 2007). According to the MEXT, compared to 2006, the number of retiring public primary school teachers will increase 25% in 2009. As a result, the Tokyo board of education will hire about 1,100 teachers this year--about five times more than 10 years ago. And this is only going to increase as more teachers retire. Of course, the increase in openings has resulted in a drop in the openings-to-applicants ratio. Ten years ago, there were approximately nine applicants for every opening, compared to 2.8 applicants for each opening last year ("Competition growing," 2007). And a third reason which may be contributing to the increase in nontraditional students in teacher preparation programs, according to Fujimoto, is that as companies restructure, people are faced with, or anticipate, being laid off. Such people tend to think, "Even if I am laid off, I can still easily get a teaching position" (personal communication, July 3, 2007).

This trend is not restricted to only Japan either. Schuetze and Slowey (2002) have identified some of the complex social, economic, and cultural transformations in modern, industrial

societies that have led to a growth in nontraditional students. They identify, in particular, the following three changes:

- the increasing social demand for higher education and the rapid massification of higher education systems which has widened the patterns of participation in higher education beyond conventional full-time school leavers.
- structural and organizational changes associated with the diversification and increasing marketization of higher education systems, establishment of new institutions and courses of study, opening up access to higher education and the introduction of new forms of teaching and learning.
- the impact of changing labour market requirements, with increasing professionalization, rapid change in occupational structures and rising qualification requirements for many employment opportunities. (p. 312)

All of this evidence should alert our attention to the need for future research in this area. And for those of us interested in improving English language teacher education curricula in Japan amidst complex, contemporary issues and pressures from various stakeholders, it seems even more relevant that we acknowledge this demographic and adapt our curriculum accordingly. Now, I will briefly touch on some of these issues surrounding English language education in the context of teacher education in Japan.

Changes in English language education in Japan

Policy shifts regarding English language education in Japan require that we rethink our approach to teacher education. Recent government policy discourse in Japan may be seen as encouraging communicative and intercultural approaches to teaching English. In 2003, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced an action plan entitled "Regarding the Establishment of an Action Plan to Cultivate 'Japanese with English Abilities.'" The introduction to this policy reads: "English has played a central role as the common international language in linking people who have different mother tongues. For children living in the 21st century, it is essential for them to acquire *communication abilities* in English as a common *international* language" (MEXT, 2003a, par. 4; emphasis mine). Butler & Iino (2005) note: "The Action Plan of 2003 was proposed in response to repeated criticisms that Japan's English education was centered on *juken eigo* and did not meet the various needs of Japan for globalization" (p. 33).

Furthermore, in MEXT's most recent *Course of Study*¹ (2001)—a nationwide curriculum

¹ The government-mandated *Course of Study* prescribes national curriculum standards for each subject and each level in Japan. Created in 1958, the *Course of Study* has been revised approximately every ten years since, in 1969, 1977, 1989, and 2001 (Hiramatsu, 2004).

policy that details the content standards to be taught from primary school through high school—several policies in its section for foreign languages in secondary schools reflect an intercultural approach. For example, one of the overall objectives requires: "deepening the understanding of language and culture" (MEXT, 2003b, par. 1). Regarding materials, it suggests using, "Materials that are useful in deepening the understanding of the ways of life and cultures of Japan and the rest of the world, raising interest in language and culture, and developing respectful attitudes to these elements" (ibid).

On the other hand, for Japanese teachers of English, it is often reported that preparing for exams is the inevitable drudgery of their classes. In fact, for many Japanese secondary teachers of English, exam pressures restrict the possibilities for doing anything but teaching from a textbook. Butler and Iino (2005) report: "The curricula at the junior and high school levels in Japan have been controlled to a great extent by the guidelines set by the MEXT, and teachers have had relatively limited control over such curricula. National guidelines prescribe the types and numbers of vocabulary, grammatical items, and cultural and societal topics that should be introduced at each school level" (p. 29).

There seems to be a contradiction here, or what Seidlhofer (1999) calls a "striking discrepancy"—that being the "'idealistic' visions of global 'real world/whole person' concerns" versus the "practical matters that impinge directly on teachers' daily practice" (p. 234). She suggests that it is up to teacher education to address these issues and prepare teachers for "the demanding, even daunting task of coping with the contradictory powers of educational ideologies and market forces in order to negotiate the gaps between global claims and local conditions" (p. 235). This may reflect only one of many contemporary issues facing English language teacher education in Japan. This, however, coupled with an increasing number of nontraditional students, requires that we make sure our curriculum addresses these issues.

Narrative Inquiry with Nontraditional Students

Up to now, I have argued that there needs to be an increased focus on nontraditional students in teacher preparation programs in Japan because of the growth of this population in higher education—both across the world and in Japan. I would also like to suggest that narrative inquiry in teacher education may be a valuable pedagogical tool as we look to improve our methods for training teachers. Bell (2002) explains how narrative inquiry is a particularly valuable approach in the field of TESOL in general. Furthermore, it has been noted that narrative is central to human knowing (Bruner, 1985), and Doyle and Carter (2003) argue that this is especially true in pre-service teacher education. First, note the authors, in order to understand pre-service teachers' development, educators have begun to

examine teachers' stories of experience, as experience is where practical knowledge is acquired (p. 130-31). Second, because novice pre-service teachers may lack the experientially-grounded knowledge for understanding classroom situations, and because they may lack some abstract disciplinary knowledge, teacher candidates are likely to "fall back on a cognitive strategy they have been using for most of their lives: they construct stories" (p. 131). As such, cases, in the form of stories, have been used to "concretize propositional knowledge, to illustrate various methods and approaches, and to trigger personal reflection" (p. 131). In addition, teacher candidates are often asked to reflect on their conceptions of teaching and their progress toward becoming a teacher in the form of personal narratives (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991).

Unfortunately, there have been very few studies which focus on narrative inquiry and nontraditional teacher candidates. Gomez, Page, and Walker (2000), for one, consider the "possibilities offered by narrative as a means for understanding and critiquing one's practices and their outcomes for prospective teachers" (p. 171). Specifically, they use narrative inquiry, and Bakhtin's idea of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, to help nontraditional teacher candidates critique multicultural perspectives on schooling. They studied one nontraditional teacher candidate who, on the one hand, brought her own internally persuasive discourse—her belief in how the world works—to the program. The authoritative discourse, on the other hand, is "that which we, as teacher educators, attempted to impose on our students..." (p. 170). By interrogating the nontraditional teacher candidates' narratives (internally persuasive discourse) along with perspectives imposed by teacher educators and programs (authoritative discourse), possibilities for reform and improvement emerge. The authors note: "Our message for other teacher educators is both to make explicit what grounds your program and practices and to enable students to tangle openly and freely with how such authoritative discourse bumps up against, is congruent with, or denies those internally persuasive discourses they bring to you" (p. 170).

In a similar study, Gomez, Walker, and Page (2000) note how narrative inquiry supported "second -degree teacher candidates' development of and reliance on lessons from their own lives as teaching resources" (p. 746). The authors advocate asking prospective teachers to tell stories of their teaching and learning experiences from the viewpoints of students, students' families, community members, and school staff. Then, representatives of these different groups may be invited to read the stories and offer their own interpretations.

Conclusion

These are just a few examples of how narrative inquiry has been used with nontraditional

teacher candidates. The important point I wish to make is that we should be developing ways in which to draw on the unique experiences of nontraditional students in our classes. In fact, the presence of nontraditional students may be a valuable resource for our instruction and preparation of future English teachers. I have met several nontraditional students over the course of the last 10 months of dissertation fieldwork in Japan. These students are motivated to learn. They take risks in their English language learning, and they are eager to experiment with various pedagogical approaches. One of the instructors of an English teaching methodology course (*eigoka kyouikuhou*) that I have been observing told me that he relished having a nontraditional student in his class. Too often, he noted, curriculum is designed for a homogenous class—without considering the diversity of the students. In this instructor's course, however, the presence of a nontraditional student consciously affected his pedagogical decisions—especially in the design of small group work and in the coordination of teaching demonstrations. The presence of the nontraditional student also positively affected the dynamics of the class, creating "good chemistry" throughout the semester. In addition, nontraditional students, noted the instructor, tend to be much better communicators than the younger students—although, of course, there are exceptions. They can also help motivate the younger students to see how attractive teaching may be; and, they can show students that it is possible to enter another field first and then return to teaching later. I hope that as we continue to improve teacher education in Japan, we will also pay more attention to the growing number of nontraditional students in our teacher training programs and recognize the unique talents and experiences they offer.

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Evaluating the intensive English language program at PSU: meeting student and business needs

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Introduction

The Intensive English Language program (IELP) at Portland State University (PSU) offers English language courses to non-native English speakers wishing to improve their language abilities. As a self-support entity² relying on tuition for funding, the IELP is not only concerned merely with student needs and quality of education; rather, it is a business that must also concern itself with advertising, profits, and competition. The study described below evaluates curricular as well as structural aspects of the IELP - not only student needs, but also the IELP as a business. As a business, the entity must monitor and evaluate advertising, enrollment, and the efficient use of funds. These areas of the program need to be regularly evaluated in order for the IELP to survive as a business and as a school.

Regular program evaluation is crucial for the success of a program. For example, a review of the curricular goals must be compared against the administration's perceptions of the needs of the students. The students' needs may range anywhere from a desire to achieve native-like proficiency to learning only the skills necessary for a specific job or trade. Sensitivity to these needs on the part of curriculum designers will help ensure greater student satisfaction with the program. Another way to evaluate a program is to determine why students have chosen this program over another. Knowing why can have implications for a program's design. Relevant features of a program include class size, teacher qualifications, tuition, and marketing.

The idea of administering an evaluation of the IELP at PSU developed from an interest in curriculum development. The original goal was to design an upper-level class that would prepare students for university courses and university life. It was found, however, that an extensive knowledge of students' needs would be necessary in order to design such a course. Not only did I lack information about what course content would be relevant to the students, but I also made assumptions about how many students in the IELP planned to attend American universities. In recent years the IELP has undergone significant changes in

² Even though PSU receives public support money, the IELP does not and is self-funded. Hiring structures, union representation, and salaries are the same for the two entities; however, funds come from different sources.

enrollment and the reasons for English language study are not as homogeneous as in past years, and will continue to change from term to term.

A survey assessing these changes provides information for planning. A detailed analysis of the survey results provides the IELP with an opportunity to respond to any discrepancies between program (business) design and participant (client) needs. Furthermore, understanding the current survey results with respect to the current IELP population makes it possible to predict how changes in enrollment could affect student needs, and consequently, program design.

Discussions of these and other issues with the director of the IELP led to the development of a questionnaire (see Appendix A) with three goals:

1. Marketing: determine *why* students have chosen to study at the IELP at PSU.
2. Needs assessment: determine *how* students plan to use their knowledge of English in the future, and *what* the students' perceived needs for English are.
3. Enrollment: determine *who* attends the IELP and *how* enrollment has changed in the past three years. Determine the consequences of these trends with regard to 1 and 2.

Background

The evaluation of the IELP from both a business and curriculum perspective is not a common approach historically. Changes throughout the history of education, however, combined with the growth of English as a world language, have led naturally to program evaluations with a dual business-curriculum perspective.

Program evaluation has been, and continues to be, an important factor in maximizing quality of education. Most educational programs, regardless of subject matter or sources of funding, critically evaluate all aspects of their program. Evaluation, the analysis of an entire program, should not be confused with assessment, which focuses on the individual learner. Brown further defines program evaluation as:

“ [An] ongoing process of data gathering, analysis, and synthesis, the entire purpose of which is to improve each element of a curriculum on the basis of what is known about all of the other elements, separately as well as collectively .”

Evaluation can serve a variety of purposes. Rea-Dickins and Germaine list several general purposes including: accountability, curriculum development, and self-development on the

part of educators. The purpose of an evaluation determines whether the type of evaluation utilized can be summative or formative (Scriven, 1968). Summative evaluation relates to decisions at the administrative level. Evaluating whether a program is effective and worth continuing is an example of a summative evaluation. Formative evaluation on the other hand, is less about program worth and more about improving the program. This type of evaluation is, in effect, confirming whether or not current practices are doing what they should (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992). The importance of these distinctions between evaluation functions can be seen in the short history of education programs.

Program evaluation in the 19th century, which coincides with the beginning of the first public education systems, took a summative approach to evaluation. Gitlin and Smyth (1989) illustrate how industrializing countries were concerned with education effectiveness and worth, since programs were funded through the use of public funds. Curriculum evaluation focused primarily on teacher behaviors and beliefs, and program effectiveness was directly measured by student retention rates.

In the 20th century, evaluation focus shifted from program worth to a more formative approach. These evaluations were administered in response to the growth of publicly funded social programs such as education (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005). Social programs directly affect their users and providers, and are a major area of public spending. The more people invest in a particular program, the more complicated any evaluation becomes. The number of motivations and purposes for evaluation increased in the 20th century as programs developed and the public demanded efficient use of their money.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a growth in evaluations of teaching methodology (Lynch, 1996). Research during these years led to the development of specific methodologies for teaching. Evaluation became a tool not just to measure the effectiveness of a program, but to measure how well students were learning as regards teaching methods, thus, a summative approach.

Despite changes in motivation or purpose, evaluations have always been concerned with goals, stakeholders, and audience. Lynch illustrates that one can often determine who the stakeholders of an evaluation are by asking, "Who is requesting the evaluation?" and "Who will be affected by the evaluation (2003, pp 10-11)?" Knowing who has most invested in the evaluation will have consequences for the goals and approach of the evaluation. Further questions seek to determine what the goals of an evaluation are, "Why is the evaluation being conducted?" and "What information is being requested and why?" Weiss (1986) defines stakeholders as either the members of a group affected by an evaluation or the

members of a group who make decisions about a program's future. A stakeholder is an important figure in the evaluation process, and the results of any evaluation should not be reviewed without answering the questions above. Responding to Lynch's questions with regards to this study, the stakeholders in this analysis are the IELP faculty (requesting information) and its students (the party affected by the evaluation).

More recent program evaluations, as well as this evaluation of the IELP, are cognizant of the global market, combined with notion of English as a global lingua franca, introducing further shifts in evaluation practices not often discussed in the literature. Although money has been an important factor in the history of program evaluation, it has been discussed in terms of efficient spending of public dollars, and not in the business sense. Numerous texts have been written on evaluating educational programs and the history of program evaluation; however, the connections between education and business have been limited. The growth of English as a commodity (Canagarajah, 1999; Kachru, 1983; McKay, 2002) has led to the development of many private English instruction institutions throughout the world, in addition to the proliferation of textbooks, the growth of TESOL programs, and the large number of countries that have adopted English as an official language.

Methods and Data

IELP enrollment for fall 2007 featured 393 students from 31 different countries, with the majority of those students coming from Japan, Korea, and Saudi Arabia. The curricular structure of the program is skill base and divided into five proficiency levels (level 1 is the lowest, level 5 is highest, focusing on four skills: grammar, listening/speaking, reading, and writing). Levels in each skill are independent of each other, allowing students to belong to different levels at the same time. Thus, a student may advance to level 4 in grammar but remain in level 3 for listening/speaking. The curriculum is designed so that a student who completes level 5 in all four skill areas has the language abilities necessary to enter a American university.

Subjects

A total of 94 college-level English language learners voluntarily participated in this survey. The population pool was not random; all students entering the IELP at the time of the study were asked to participate. Table 1 shows population percentage by country of origin of survey participants and total fall enrollment³. Entering students numbered slightly over 100

³ The percentage discrepancies in table 1 between fall enrollment and entering students is expected. There are 29.5% more Saudi students enrolled in the IELP than the percentage of Saudis who participated in the survey. This discrepancy is due to two factors. First, the number of Saudi students entering each term is declining although retention rates of these students is high. Second, entering students for fall term are expected to participate in orientations that coincide with

students, 94 of whom participated in the survey. Students enter the IELP at a variety of different proficiency levels.

Table 1 Population comparison: Fall enrollment vs. survey participation

Country	Participants (%)	
	Fall term enrollment	Survey Participants
	N = 393	N = 94
Saudi Arabia	36.9%	7.4%
Japan	20.1%	23.4%
Korea	16%	27.7%
Other	9.4%	17%
Taiwan	8.1%	12.8%
Thailand	4.8%	7.4%
UAE	2.8%	0%
China	1.7%	4.3%

The results of Table 1 will be significant when discussing specific survey items and cross correlations with regard to country of origin. Enrollment figures and trends in enrollment will be discussed later.

Design and Development of the Questionnaire

The survey was designed to address the first two goals of this study, marketing and curriculum (see section). These goals were developed on the basis of information gathered through interviews with the director of the IELP. The survey design was also approved by the human subjects review committee at PSU before gathering data.

The layout of the questionnaire follows guidelines for survey writing as suggested by Brown (2001) and Dörnyei (2003). Questions were typically grouped together based on the type of information they solicited, as well as the amount of time required to answer. Items regarding marketing were often yes/no or single response questions, and therefore were grouped at the beginning of the survey. Curriculum items, however, required more self-reflection and consequently were placed in the second half. Biodata was limited to country of origin and gender in order to preserve participant anonymity. Question format varied among checklist items, yes/no questions, ranking, and one open-ended question.

A pilot study of entering students in summer 2006 greatly helped determine the content of the survey as well. An analysis of the pilot survey provided information for adding or removing options for checklist items. Options not chosen by any student were removed while

the dates of Ramadan, a religious holiday, which many of the Saudi students observe and which prevented them from participating in the survey.

responses written in by students were often added to the list. Also, the rank question was modified from open rank to forced rank since a large percentage of students did not complete the question as expected.

Survey intelligibility was of particular concern since all of the participants were non-native speakers of English with varying degrees of English proficiency. Several high-level IELP students were asked to review the survey for items that might prove difficult or confusing to low-level speakers.

Distribution and Collection of the Questionnaire

The final survey was administered to IELP students during new student orientation at the beginning of fall term 2006. Participants were encouraged to seek help if they did not understand the meaning of a survey item, and language support was available to speakers of Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Arabic.

Statistical Analysis of the Data

Some items in the survey were quantified and analyzed accordingly. Responses to checklist items, yes/no questions, and single-response items were assigned nominal values. Frequency counts of the data demonstrate which items were most often chosen and cross tabulation shows how these results vary by country of origin. Continuous data were analyzed descriptively for the purpose of evaluating mean values.

One survey item asks participants to rank language skills in order of importance. The results for this forced-choice, rank-order question were analyzed as nominal data since not all participants will perceive the conceptual distance between ranked items in the same manner. For example, a participant may place importance on grammar and writing, but places none whatsoever on translation. Thus, the perceptual distance between grammar and writing is small while the difference between writing and translation is great. Unlike interval data, in which the conceptual distance between each choice is equal, nominal data allow for variation. The Friedman test was applied to the rank-order question in order to determine the mean rank of each item.

Correlation tests between country of origin and specific frequency counts did not meet assumptions for the Pearson Chi-Square. Due to the low numbers of students from a large number of different countries, expected counts were often less than 5. Correlations were possible only for the top six countries in terms of enrollment numbers: China, Japan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and Thailand raised expected counts for the Chi Square and showed

trends towards significance. Thus, higher numbers of survey participants from these countries would sufficiently raise expected counts and meet assumptions for the Chi-Square test.

Results

The results of the survey have been divided into three sections: marketing, curriculum, and enrollment. It is important to recognize, however, that the results of certain survey items are important for understanding more than just marketing or curriculum. For example, knowing why students learn English can be a motive for curricular change, but it can also be used as a tool for targeting specific student populations through advertising. In addition, a discussion of enrollment can help predict how the results of the survey would shift relative to population changes.

Marketing

Multiple survey items were included to address marketing concerns of the IELP. As a business, program administrators seek to understand how students learn about the IELP, why they have chosen the IELP over other similar institutions, how long they intend to stay in the program, and whether or not they plan to attend PSU or any other higher education program in the U.S.

Choosing an Intensive English Program

Because the IELP is a self-supporting institution, recruiting students is critical to satisfying certain budget expectations. Table 2 demonstrates how students entering the IELP first learned of the program. A significant percentage, 56.4%, heard about the program through a friend or family member. Thus, despite advertising attempts, the majority of students first learn about the IELP through word of mouth. Learning of the program through a professor or advisor is the second most frequent at 18.1%, with students still relying on the knowledge of others. Only 19.1% learned of the IELP through marketing means such as the program website or magazine advertisements.

Table 2 How students first learned of the IELP

	Percent
Friend/Family member	56.4
Professor/Advisor	18.1
Website	13.8
Magazine	5.3

A further breakdown of results by country of origin as shown in Table 3 is more revealing for

marketing purposes. For Japanese students, a professor or advisor is likely to be the first to mention the IELP rather than a friend or family member. The opposite is true for Korean students. Only 5.5% of the participants, mostly from Japan, learned of the program through a magazine advertisement.

Table 3 First learn of IELP, cross-tab with country of origin

Frequency of source of information (% of N)					
Country of Origin	Friend or family member	Professor/Advisor	Magazine	Website	
Saudi Arabia	6.7	0	0	1.1	
Japan	1.1	14.6	4.4	2.2	
Korea	21.3	1.1	1.1	0	
Taiwan	10.1	0	0	0	
Thailand	5.6	1.1	0	1.1	
China	3.3	1.1	0	0	

Reasons why participants chose the PSU IELP over other programs show similarities to the previous question regarding how the students learned of the IELP. Forty students indicated that one reason they chose the IELP over other English language programs is that the program was recommended to them by someone. Word of mouth is therefore not only a common way for students to learn about the IELP but also for choosing to study there. Positive experiences in the IELP facilitate further recommendations within communication networks, whereas public relations efforts could raise the levels of program recommendations from university advisors.

Results for *location* and *study at PSU* as reasons for choosing the IELP, are nearly equal. *Location* received twenty-six responses while *study at PSU* received twenty-nine. Although the IELP is not funded through the PSU budget, the two institutions are nevertheless connected. Thus, a student who chooses *study at PSU* as his/her reason for choosing to study at the IELP, may desire to study as an international student at PSU after completing English studies. Alternatively, the student may be expressing a desire to study at the PSU campus with no future intention of being a PSU student.

Saudi students receive support for study at the IELP through government scholarships. This fact accounts for all seven participants who chose *scholarship* as a reason for choosing the IELP. Issues of scholarship and enrollment numbers will be revisited when discussing trends in enrollment.

Intent to study at a U.S. University

For IELP administrators, several questions arise regarding study at U.S. universities after the completion of the IELP:

- How many students plan to attend a U.S university upon completion of the IELP?
- Of the students who plan to study in the U.S., how many plan to attend PSU?
- What is the percentage of IELP students that actually attend a U.S. university?

This study addresses the first two questions, but future student tracking is needed to answer question 3.

The results in Table 4 show the percentage of students who do not wish to study at a U.S. university as being 2.1% higher than those who do. However, the percentage of students who are unsure of whether they will study at a U.S. university is 24.5%. Significantly, 70% of the students who responded yes also responded that the university they wish to attend is PSU.

Table 4 Intent to study at a U.S. University

		Percent
	Yes	36.2
	No	38.3
	Unsure	24.5
	Total	98.9
Missing	System	1.1
Total		100.0

Study at Home

A recent venture by the IELP is to create intensive English language programs in the home country of their students. Thus, students would be able to receive an education comparable to that of the IELP at PSU without traveling outside their country. The concept is unfamiliar to most currently enrolled IELP students; however, a survey item asked students if they would prefer to study in their home country if the IELP were to offer classes there. Table 5 shows that 50% of respondents did not wish to study English in their home country. Only 18.1% said that that they would prefer to study at home, while 30.9% were unsure.

The results of this survey item do not shed much light on the probable success of IELP programs developed in home countries for several reasons. First, student unfamiliarity with the concept must be taken into consideration. Also, the population of this survey is limited to

students already in the U.S. A broader survey of students in the participating countries would need to be undertaken in order to understand the level of demand for such a program.

Table 5 IELP at home country

		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	17	18.1
	No	47	50.0
	Unsure	29	30.9
	Total	93	98.9
Missing	System	1	1.1
Total		94	100.0

Length of study

A final survey item related to marketing asks participants to state their intended length of study at the IELP with a total of 65 students responding to the survey item. The IELP follows PSU's academic calendar, which is based on the quarter system. Each term runs 10 to 11 weeks and the academic year begins around the last week of September, and there are four in a year.

Responses ranged from 1 term to 2 years. The mean, however, was two terms. The curricular structure of the IELP does not require students to stay any set length of time. Students may enter and leave the program at any given proficiency level. A breakdown of length of study by country of origin did not produce any statistically significant results. Participants from Saudi Arabia, however, were most likely to commit to an academic year since they come to the program on year-long government scholarships.

Curriculum

Why learn English?

Participants provided a variety of responses showing reasons for why they are studying English. The five most common were: work, TOEFL, TOEIC, life enrichment, and conversation. *English for work* was the number one reason with 47 responses. The TOEFL (test of English as a foreign language) was a close second with 41 responses. The TOEIC (test of English for international communication), with 13 responses, is a test often required by employers in Asian countries.

Two final reasons for choosing the IELP are *life enrichment* and *conversation* with 10 and 5 responses respectively, both of them write-in responses. Students who wrote-in something like *life enrichment* are likely learning English for personal reasons, not necessarily related to more typical reasons such as work or academic study. Those who responded *conversation* appear to be learning for communicative purposes with less focus on academic uses. These latter responses were significantly less frequent than the top three choices; however, they show the diversity of student needs within the program.

Class size

A question as to class size reflects student needs and directly relates to program design, especially since the IELP, like other programs, uses class size as a selling point. The IELP website claims that the average class size is 15 students, and the survey showed that students prefer classes around 12 to 13 students (standard deviation 8.05).

Learning preferences

As indicated on page 14, the IELP structure is designed around a curriculum based on a separation of skills. A question on the curriculum revealed that over half of the participants (54.3%) preferred learning language skills separately. Only 29.8% of the respondents chose integrated skills and 10.6% preferred a curriculum based on English for specific purposes. A breakdown of responses by country of origin, as shown in Table 6, demonstrates imbalances in the results for individual countries. Although the majority of participants preferred to learn language skills separately, 46.1% of the Koreans and 75.0% of the Thai participants expressed a preference for an integrated skills curriculum design. Participants from Taiwan and Japan were also more likely to choose English for specific purposes as a preferred class style. Curriculum design was not listed as an option under reasons for choosing the IELP; therefore, the question remains as to whether or not high rates of preference for separated skills is due to a conscious choice by participants.

Table 6 Class style preference and country of origin cross-tabulation

	Class Style			Total
	Each skill separately	Integrated skills	English for specific purposes	
China	2	1	1	4
Japan	12	4	4	20
Korea	14	12	0	26
Saudi Arabia	5	0	1	6
Taiwan	6	2	4	12
Thailand	4	3	0	7
Total Responses (all countries)	51	28	10	89

The results for learning-style preference were overwhelmingly dominated by a preference for learning by speaking with people, so much so that a breakdown by country of origin was statistically insignificant. Table 7 shows 72.3% of the participants responded in favor of learning by speaking. Results for completing written activities and listening to a professor were significantly lower at 8.5% and 6.4% respectively. Such a high response for speaking is likely related to the fact that few students come to the IELP with no previous English language study. Part of the allure of the IELP, however, is that students can study English in a context where English is used inside as well as outside the classroom. Thus, a preference for learning by speaking likely reflects a desire to capitalize on a learning environment not possible in the home country.

Table 7 Learning style preference

		Frequency	Percent
	Speaking with people	68	72.3
	Completing written activities	8	8.5
	Listening to professor	6	6.4
	Total	82	87.2
Missing	System	12	12.8
Total		94	100.0

Skills rank

A final item asked participants to rank language skills in order of personal importance. Participants ranked items on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is considered *most important* and 6 is *least important*. The mean rank for each language skill is summarized in Table 8. *Listening/speaking* received the highest marks of importance with a mean rank of 1.36. These results agree with earlier results for learning style preference (Table 7) in which 72.3% of the participants chose speaking as their preferred learning style. It is clear that students enter the IELP with expectations of improving and practicing their listening and speaking skills in English. Following *listening/speaking* are both *reading* and *writing* with the same mean rank at 3.04. Next is *grammar* at 3.87 and *translation* at 4.79. The language skill reported to be the least important for the participants is *slang and/or idioms*. It should be noted that translation and slang/idioms are not skills specifically taught. Teachers may incorporate elements of these skills into their teaching, but individual courses are not offered in these areas.

Table 8 Mean rank of language skills by perceived importance

	Mean Rank	N	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Listening/Speaking	1.36	90	.928	1	6
Reading	3.04	90	1.208	1	6
Writing	3.04	90	1.198	1	6
Grammar	3.87	90	1.447	1	6
Translation	4.79	90	1.156	2	6
Slang and/or Idioms	4.90	90	1.281	1	6

Two questions caused confusion among participants and were not included in the results. The first asks participants to name their major course of study. A frequent response was “IELP” rather than subjects such as biology, engineering, or nursing. The second asked students, “By the end of this year, how do you hope to be able to use English?” The responses varied greatly and many participants did not respond. The few quantifiable results would have been statistically insignificant.

Trends in Enrollment

Tables 9-12 represent enrollment figures during fall term for the past four years. Students may enroll at the beginning of any term throughout the year; however, fall term is generally representative of year-long enrollment numbers (with the exception of summer term). The tables reveal a trend in substantial overall growth in student enrollment over the past four years. Closer examination, however, shows significant differences in enrollment numbers depending on country of origin. Three types of trends could be identified: stable enrollment, fluctuating enrollment, and increasing enrollment. It should be noted that no country has shown any significant decline in enrollment numbers in the past four years.

Table 9 IELP enrollment Fall 2003

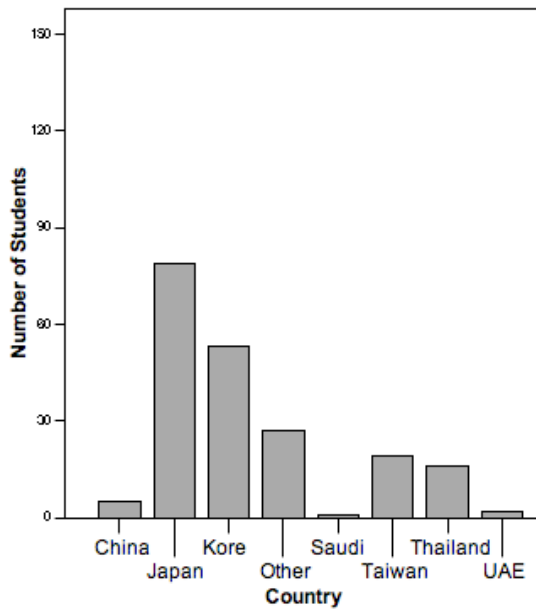


Table 10 IELP enrollment Fall 2004

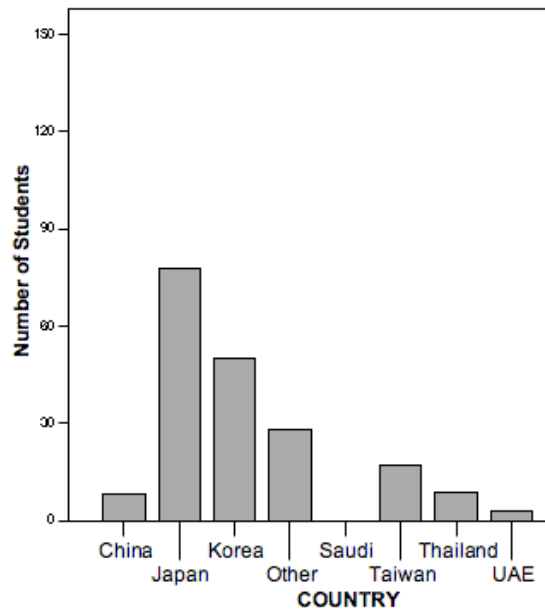


Table 11 IELP enrollment Fall 2005

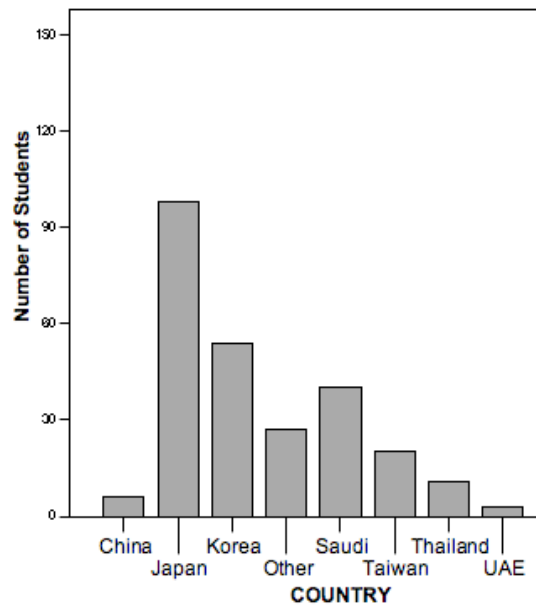
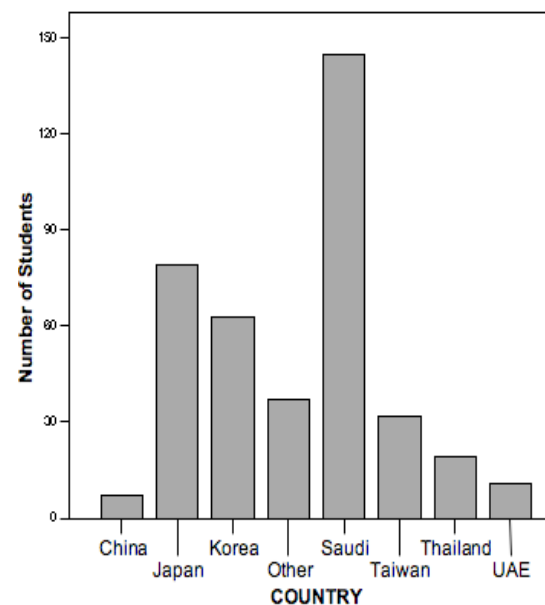


Table 12 IELP enrollment Fall 2006



Three countries, China, Korea, and Taiwan, fall into the category of stable enrollment. China has shown to be particularly stable with a range of 5 to 8 students. Korea and Taiwan show stable enrollment figures with no significant increases until Fall 2006 (table 12). Enrollment increases from Fall 2005 to Fall 2006 are 16.6% and 60% for Korea and Taiwan respectively.

Japan and Thailand show enrollments that fluctuate from year to year. Starting in Fall 2003 and continuing to Fall 2006, Thai students numbered 16, 9, 11 and 19. Although the number of Thai students has fluctuated, the overall number of students is relatively insignificant when

compared with the number of Japanese students. Japanese enrollment has held steady around 79 students every year except for 2005 in which enrollment increased dramatically to 98 students, an increase of 24%. Enrollment for Japan has since returned to around 80 students.

The final enrollment category is increasing enrollment. Saudi Arabia shows the clearest results of increasing numbers of students. Increases in Saudi enrollment have been so rapid in the past two years that a breakdown by term is necessary to show the full trend.

Table 13 Total Saudi Arabia enrollment by term

Spring 2005	Summer 2005	Fall 2005	Winter 2006	Spring 2006	Summer 2006	Fall 2006
1	2	40	84	120	138	145

Table 13 shows Saudi Arabia enrollment increasing by nearly 40 students each term during the 2005-2006 academic year. Increases in numbers have slowed since Spring 2006 as the first group of Saudi student graduates and entering students only slightly outnumber those who exit the program.

Key to understanding such rapid growth in the numbers of Saudi students is an agreement made by the U.S. and Saudi government with regards to English language study. A summit meeting between George Bush and Crown Prince Abdullah in 2005 produced an agreement to “increase the number of young Saudi students to travel and study in the United States”. The result of the agreement has led to 15,000 Saudi students studying in the U.S. as of Fall 2006. The future of these scholarships is uncertain, although it appears that the Saudi and U.S. governments are expecting the scholarships to be a long-term solution for improving relations between the two countries.

Discussion

The results of the survey are critical for evaluating the current status of the program and for making recommendations to the IELP staff with regards to both students as well as the IELP as a business. This evaluation is summative in nature and makes suggestions for improvements.

Recommendations for marketing and curriculum

The IELP focuses overly much on preparing students for university study. The IELP website states that it is appropriate for students who wish to learn English for a variety of reasons. In

terms of their language skills, students who complete all 5 levels of the IELP are theoretically prepared to study at a U.S. The program and curriculum are intended to prepare students for the U.S. university system. However, with 38.3% of the students responding that they do not wish to attend a U.S. university, and 24.5% unsure (see section 4.1.2), preparation for university is not a pressing need.

The reasons why students are learning English also show that the curriculum should not focus solely on preparing students for English-medium universities. The total number of responses for students who wish to use English for employment-related purposes was 60 (see section 4.2.1). Based on this finding, a shift in focus towards English for employment purposes would not be unreasonable.

The average planned length of study for all of the students was two terms (see section 4.1.4). Several questions arise from this finding:

- Do academic calendar conflicts with the home university prevent students from studying a 3rd term?
- Is the cost of tuition a factor in length of study?
- Do students who enter the IELP at different times of the year stay for different amounts of time?

The answers to these questions could result in significant changes in the IELP marketing and program structure. Conflicts in terms of academic calendars could warrant the creation of variable term dates. If cost is a deciding factor, the IELP may want to offer tuition breaks for students who commit to three terms rather than one or two. Increasing the average length of stay from two to three terms could have at least two effects. First, the IELP will receive greater revenue. Second, enrollment numbers would become more stable during the fall, winter and spring terms.

The results for the language skills rank (see Table 8) demonstrate that a majority of students place greater importance on listening and speaking skills over other skills such as grammar, reading and writing. This result is complimented by the fact that the majority of students also prefer learning through speaking (see section 4.2.3). The combination of these results makes a strong case for increased opportunities for IELP students to practice these skills. Development of listening/speaking electives or offering extracurricular opportunities to practice these skills would be worthwhile.

Recommendations based on enrollment patterns

Current enrollment trends are largely favorable to the future success of the IELP program. As a self-supporting institution, enrollment growth is directly related to increases in revenue. However, increases in overall enrollment may have disadvantages as well. Class size is one of the first elements of the program to be affected, particularly when the enrollment increase is rapid, and higher than expected. With larger numbers of students, the IELP must find not only more qualified instructors, but also more classrooms in which to hold the courses. The IELP shares classroom facilities with other programs and departments. Currently, other units also show signs of growth. Should numbers continue to rise, growth will eventually exceed classroom availability, at which point program directors will need to determine what the limits of enrollment should be.

The anomalous increase in Saudi students, as noted above, has introduced a large number of students from an educational and cultural background that, until very recently, was unfamiliar to many IELP faculty and staff. A program that was once largely dominated by Asian students is quickly approaching a Saudi Arabian majority. The IELP is accustomed to meeting the needs of students from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, although certain groups, such as the Japanese and Koreans, have a longer history in the IELP. Curricular change in favor of Saudi student needs will depend on stable enrollment numbers and a confidence on the part of IELP staff that scholarships will continue to be awarded in years to come.

Conclusion

This study of the IELP at PSU is neither exhaustive nor complete. Furthermore, one must be careful not to assume that the present results will hold true as the program, particularly its participants, changes. It is apparent, however, that students have expressed specific needs and desires that often vary depending on country of origin. Thus, examination of enrollment figures from each country could be important for program and curriculum design.

A number of program components must be further examined for a more complete study. For example, consistent program evaluation is needed with regard to student tracking. The IELP would benefit from detailed records of where students go after their studies at the IELP and how they actually use English in their lives, which may differ from what students thought their uses of English would be when first entering the program. This study looks at how many students plan to attend a U.S. university; however, knowing the actual number of students who continue their studies in the U.S. is needed as well.

Another element missing from this study is a survey of the opinions of currently enrolled students, alumni, and faculty at the IELP. Students who have been enrolled in the IELP for at least one term would have the experiences necessary to evaluate the education they have received. Moreover, these students would also have an invested interest in making their opinions heard in hopes of bettering the program to meet their needs. Students who go on to use English at the university level could make judgments about how well the program prepared them for the TOEFL or improved their academic English abilities. Finally, an analysis of faculty input is necessary to understand any discrepancies between student needs and curriculum goals. Also, instructors who have first-hand contact with students may have opinions about what curriculum changes would best fit the needs of a changing student population.

Many aspects of the program remained to be evaluated; nonetheless, these results represent a starting point. They are a starting point not only for program change, but also for future program analysis. The IELP, similar to many other intensive English programs throughout the U.S., must find a balance between meeting student as well as business needs. Program evaluation is one step towards finding that balance.

Appendix A: Sample Survey

In each section, please mark the appropriate box or write your response in the blank at the end of each question. If the appropriate option is not included, please mark "other" and specify your answer

1. How did you first learn about the IELP?

- A friend or family member
- The IELP website
- My university professor or advisor
- Other (please specify)_____

2. Why did you choose the IELP at PSU? (mark all that apply)

- Location
- The IELP was recommended to me by someone
- Cost
- I received a scholarship to study here
- Housing options
- I want to study at PSU
- Other (please specify)_____

3. If the IELP offered classes in your home country, would you prefer to study in your home country?

- Yes No Unsure

4. What is your major course of study? _____

5. After you finish the IELP, do you plan to attend a **U.S.** university?

- Yes No Unsure

If Yes, which University? _____

6. How long do you plan to study at the IELP? _____ Unsure

7. Why are you learning English? (mark all that apply)

I need to pass TOEFL

I need to pass TOEIC

I need to pass the University entrance exam in my home country

I will need English for work

Other (please specify) _____

8. Please rank the following skills in order of importance to you. Place the skill in the corresponding box.

most important

* Listening/Speaking

* Reading

* Writing

* Slang and/or idioms

* Translation

* Grammar

least important

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

9. In your opinion, what is the best number of students in a classroom? _____

10. Which learning style best describes you?

- I learn English best by speaking with people
- I learn English best by completing written exercises
- I learn English best by listening to a professor
- Other (please specify) _____

11. Which type of English class do you prefer most?

- I like to learn each language skill separately. (grammar class, writing class, etc)
- I like to learn a variety of skills at the same time (skills combined in one class)
- I like to learn English for my specific purpose (for example, English for business, or English for medicine)
- Other (please specify): _____

12. By the end of this year, how do you hope to be able to use English?

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An analysis of two students' writing portfolios

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1 Background of the study

For the past ten years, I have been involved in EAP (English for Academic Purposes). Before I began my teaching at university in April 2008, I had taught TOEFL and IELTS writing by applying genre-based approach from September 2004 to February 2008. From April 2007, I taught IELTS writing at Japan College of Foreign Languages (JCFL) for students preparing to study at art universities. The IELTS writing is divided into task 1 and task 2. Task 1 includes summarizing data from charts with more than 150 words, whereas task 2 has argumentation essays with more than 250 words. Both tasks require that learners follow the necessary language features and rhetorical structures of academic genre. Due to these needs, genre-based approach is suitable for teaching IELTS writing. Still, in July and August 2007 I noticed the weaknesses of the genre approach, after I had reviewed the literature by referring to the process genre approach (Badger and White, 2000). Firstly, I might not have fully grasped students' perceptions about the academic genre, and secondly I might not have activated students' learning of it. In order to bring process-based elements into genre teaching, I thought of evaluating the methodology of "writing portfolio", and in October 2007 I decided to do a study involving analyzing two students' writing portfolios. After designing the procedure based on the models suggested by Yasuda (2005) and Hyland (2001), I asked two students in my class to select one argumentative essay from their collected writings, reflect upon their first draft, revise their essays, add reflections on them, and summarize their learning. The results of the study were assessed, leading to specific implications for implementing the writing portfolio.

2 Literature Review

In the literature, there have been two conflicting approaches. The first is the product approach in which teachers give students a model text and students practice their writing. Consequently, it includes model text, comprehension/analysis/manipulation, new input, and finally parallel text (Robinson, 1991). In contrast, the process approach is used to develop learners' skills more actively through their editing and revising activities (Robinson, 1991; Tribble, 1997). The process-based approach covers such phases of skill development as writing task, first draft, feedback, revision, second draft, feedback, and final revision (Robinson, 1991; White and Arndt, 1991; Reid, 1993).

In recent developments in teaching writing, students are encouraged to be aware of the reader-writer relationship and the genre (Swales, 1990; Johns, 1997; Tribble, 1997). Such a genre approach includes a text construction by referring to the following features: the purpose of writing, rhetorical organization and language features needed in the social settings, and writer-reader relationship in the discourse community (Swales, 1990; Reid, 1993; Badger and White, 2000). Some researchers regard feedback as essential to help explicitly recognize the genre as the metalanguage. One methodology emphasizing feedback is suggested by Dudley and St John (1998). Also, McDonough and Shaw (2003) indicate that error correction should reflect “appropriateness of writing to its purpose and intended audience as well as topic and content criteria.”(p.166)

Although the genre approach can provide learners with language features and rhetorical structure, some criticize its methodology. They say that genre methodology can be too prescriptive (Flowerdew, 1993; Badger and White, 2000). These researchers claim that its weakness is to “see learners as largely passive” (Badger and White, p.157), because the emphasis is on text, not on learners’ skills (Badger and White, 2000; Hyland 2001, 2003). Badger and White (2000) recommend that teachers apply process teaching to a genre approach. They use the term process genre approach to describe how students write a draft, revise it and finalize construction through the awareness of genre features. With these phases, the teacher can facilitate learners producing a text that suits the target discourse community. Similarly, Hyland (2001, 2003) suggests that genre and process approaches are complementary.

More recently, process genre is strongly supported by researchers building on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (Gillette, 1994; Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf, 2006; Hyland, 2001, 2003; Yasuda, 2005). First, they claim that each learner has differences in their views towards learning L2 writing. Thus, teachers should know about learners’ perceptions and developmental potential in terms of genre and metalanguage skills (Yasuda, 2005). Next, researchers argue that teachers may develop learners’ metalinguistic skills by facilitating learners’ reflections on linguistic features and text organization (Hyland, 2001, 2003).

For methodological options to blend process-based approach into genre teaching, there are collaborative teacher-student conferences, students’ writing portfolios, and so on (Hamp-Lyons and Condon, 1999; Johns, 1997). Additionally, some researchers claim that a teaching methodology integrating reading and writing can be effective for implementing a process genre approach (Shuying, 2002).

3 The study and research questions

A writing portfolio generally is regarded to be a collection of students' writing used for their assessment and development. It includes such main elements as collection, selection and reflection of learners' learning (Hamp-Lyons and Condon, 1999). In October last year, I asked two students to select an argumentation essay and undertake structured activities under the guided procedure of a writing portfolio.

One student (Student 1) is a 20 year old female. She graduated from high school in March 2006, and she entered JCFL in April 2006. She selected an argumentation essay about secondary students' need to study music and art as required subjects. Another student (Student 2) is a female in her late 20s. She graduated from university and had work experience subsequently. She chose an argumentation essay about university curriculum. Both students have English proficiency at the upper-intermediate to advanced level.

The procedure for the two students' portfolios is based upon the research framework of process writing by Yasuda (2005) and Hyland (2001). Yasuda (2005) investigated three learners' draft and revision essays. She includes some questions about students' revision and perceptions. Similarly, Hyland (2001) cites the writing portfolio to assess students' timed essays, as suggested by Johns (1997). The questions in the writing portfolio are related to the students' interpretation of an essay question, their writing structure, reflection upon the problems of their writing and solutions.

Then, the students' writing and their reflections in the study specifically proceed in the following manner. After describing their perceptions toward L2 writing, two students are asked to read their first draft, and mention their strengths and weaknesses. Based on their reflections, the students then edit their first draft, revising the essays. Completing them, students write reflective comments about the revised essays, including strong and weak elements. Finally, the students summarize what they have learned from the activities.

As a result, the data collection and analysis of two students' writing portfolios are divided into two students' argumentation essays (first draft and revised essays) and their reflective comments upon these essays.

The study includes the following four research questions:

- 1) Can the data and analysis from the study help me grasp the two students' perceptions and learning potential for the academic genre?

- 2) Can the guided activities used in the study fully facilitate the two students' activeness for learning the academic genre?
- 3) What might be the implications for implementing writing portfolios?
- 4) What might the implications be for future research?

4 Results of the study

The results of the portfolios from Student 1 and Student 2 are described in this section. The first draft and revised essays of these two students are in the appendix of this paper, and students' reflections upon their first draft and revised essays are provided in this section.

4.1 First draft and revised essay / Student 1

Regarding the priorities for writing an essay, Student 1 referred to the stages of composition including "understanding the topic, deciding an opinion, organizing an idea, and picking approximate and correct words."

Evaluating the first draft of her essay, Student 1 made the following comments:

The whole structure was written well and in the introductory part, I could make logical form of starting an essay. On the other hand, I did not use much conjunction, and also I could not use some words correctly. The part which I must modify is supporting sentences because they were not so specific and lack of conviction.

After writing a revised essay, she wrote her reflective view:

My revised essay has good structure again and there are more conjunction words. In the supporting sentences, I took some examples based on my experience. But I should have written 'the name of healing music', the situation where I drew pictures, and how I got observation skills.

Finally Student 1 summarizes her practice of writing a draft and revised essays in the following manner:

Through this practice I learned that I do have skill of making good structure but I do not have sufficient vocabulary and I have not explained my idea by using higher level grammar. Thus, I was able to find my strengths and weaknesses clearly, so by using this I would like to develop my writing skills more and more.

Commentary on the reflection by Student 1

From her reflection on the writing stages, Student 1 attempted to grasp her learning through rhetorical structures, detailed supporting examples, and transitional words, the elements needed in the genre of argumentation essay. Then, she was able to notice that detailed examples, advanced vocabulary and grammar are necessary for her development.

4.2 First draft and revised essay / Student 2

For the important elements for writing, Student 2 mentioned that the first priority of her writing is “logic” of the essay and the second one is “correctness.” From her comments, she has some differences from Student 1, as Student 2 gives essay organization a higher priority in writing an essay.

Student 2 was asked to comment on her first draft. She evaluated her own initial essay in the following way:

My strength is composition (organization). I can bring the essay to a conclusion. But the sentences are hard to read, and the examples are too weak to prove my opinion. Next time when I write, I will change expressions of sentences to make clearly to read.

Then, based on her assessment of the first draft, she wrote a revised essay. Reading her revised essay, she gave her evaluation.

My strength is persuasiveness. And weakness is that revised essay is too long. I changed examples to prove my opinion intelligibly and changed some expressions of sentences to make clearly to read.

Finally, Student 2 summarized her learning from the first draft and revised paper, providing the reflective comments.

I was satisfied that I could write more logically in the second essay. Rereading first essay made me be more objective. So I could write by putting myself in reader’s place. I could realize examples in first essay were weak for proof of my opinion. I had learned rereading was good for improvement from this practice.

Commentary on the reflection by Student 2

From her writing stages, it is assumed that Student 2 also recognized language features and rhetorical structures. She gained good awareness of the genre of an argumentation essay. As a result, in the revised paper, she applied convincing examples based on her experience. Especially, she understood her essay from the readers' perspective, which is her strength in the area of developmental potential.

5 Discussion, implications and conclusion

The results of these two students' writing portfolios including their essay revisions and reflections show advantages in dealing with two weaknesses of genre-based teaching. In the first place, students' perceptions and developmental capacities were made explicit. Student 1 places her priority on logical strength, while Student 2 regards essay writing as overall writing activities. Their revision behaviors and reflective comments are helpful, as both students' data showed that they understood the genre for argumentation essay in IELTS writing. For these students, I can provide advanced feedback to further facilitate their metalanguage skills. Also, these two learners were activated as they assessed their first draft and revised essays through appropriate analyses of the genre. Student 1 understood the direction of her improvement within the stages of the genre analysis. In the case of Student 2, she was able to understand the reader's perspective in an argumentation essay, as she carefully reread her first draft essay. Both students showed a willingness to develop their writing, which was attained by using their metalanguage abilities for an argumentation essay, rather than being restricted by test taking techniques for the examination paper.

The two students in the research were well acquainted with the academic genre and they had a readiness for the writing portfolio. Then, it might be useful to apply the writing portfolio later in the academic semester, after detailed instructions and practices about the academic genre of IELTS writing have been given. Also, students should undertake these activities and reflections carefully on the lines of a homework assignment, as they review their learning. In this sense, the writing portfolio should be used twice as a term paper, that is, in July and December, at the end of each academic term. By these months, students have sufficient learning about IELTS essays. They can describe their perceptions and provide comments from genre-based perspectives. Additionally, they have already collected enough essays to compare, select and reflect upon them at some depth after experience of IELTS writing practice.

The present study has its focus on the analysis of students' writing portfolios. A future study might be extended to evaluate teacher-student conferences. Another useful mode of

research would be to evaluate how reading and writing can be combined through a process genre approach, strengthening students' writing ability.

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APPENDIX A Students' first draft and revised essays

Two Students' first draft and revised essays are shown respectively in this appendix.

FIRST DRAFT / Student 1

There is a controversial subject that all students should be demanded to learn art and music in secondary school. I think art and music are necessary part of secondary school students. I would like to introduce reasons and examples to support my idea.

Firstly, there is obviously a difference point between art and music, and other subjects such as mathematics or social studies. It means that the former use our body and sense while the latter use our brain. So if students don't have any time to learn art or music in their impressive school life, they must be a no-culture person, because our ability of sense develops in the teenage years. For example, when I was a secondary school student, I liked to draw pictures and observing objects. As I looked at the objects well, my ability of observations on human developed more.

Secondly, art and music have a power to draw our ripeness. For example, when you are really tired, you can just listen to your favorite music. Soon you will feel relaxed and healed. In fact, when I want to sleep deeply, I listen to heal-music, such as sounds of sea or stream with slow tempo. Then I fall asleep easily. I also have another experience of art. When I really feel angry, I tried to watch a spiritual artistic movie: a girl wearing pearl earring. After I watched the movie, I didn't feel any anger.

In conclusion, to study art and music in our sensitive generation is really important because art and music make it possible to give us cultural influence. So, I believe that the art and music is necessary to develop our personality early.

REVISED ESSAY / Student 1

There is a controversial issue that all students should learn art and music in their secondary school. I believe that art and music are necessary part of secondary school students. So I would like to mention some reasons and examples to support my opinion.

Firstly, there is obviously the different point between art and music, and other subjects such as mathematics or social studies. While the latter uses our logical part and knowledge, the former uses our sensibility and creativity. **According to my secondary school principal who was a specialist of children's psychology and growth, he said that if students do not have time to learn art and music, they must lack the essential skills in sensibility and creativity, because our sense develops easily in the impressible teenage.** In fact, when I was a secondary school student, I used to draw pictures. As I looked at the objects my observation skills developed more. **Although logical skill is also necessary to develop ourselves, such observation skills are grown through art and music.**

Secondly, art and music have a special power to refresh. **For example, when I was a secondary student and faced the hardship of high school's entrance exam, I was often stressed out. Then, I listened to favorite music to relax and release.** So I could change my mind by the music and I recovered. **Moreover, I could not sleep easily the day before my club's match. Then I tried to listen to healing music which has sea or stream sounds with slow tempo.** These music let me fall asleep directly. So in the next morning, I was able to put forth on the match.

In conclusion, to learn art and music in our sensitive generation is really important to develop mind because art and music make it possible to give us cultural influence. Therefore, I believe that the art and music is essential part to grow our personality in secondary school.

Commentary on the first draft and revised essay by Student 1

The strengths of the revised essay by student 1 are the supporting examples based on her own personal experience during her secondary school. Revised sentences in the text indicated by bold type show that student 1's argument is strengthened by adding more specific examples. Also, the transitional words are usefully added for improving coherence within the text.

FIRST DRAFT / Student 2

Some people think that students should take classes about many subjects while other people think that students should take only classes in specialized in one subject. Although taking special classes is good for students, I think that students should learn about a lot of subjects in university. In this essay, I will indicate about my opinion.

Firstly, there are chances to have wide viewpoint for students if they have a lot of kind of classes. For example, when I was a university student, I was interested in commerce at the beginning. But I had to take classes about advertisement and also other subjects for getting credits. After studying about advertisement, my interest changed. I began to have a desire to learn about it more and more. So taking various classes is good thing for students to have interests widely.

Secondly, there are not so many students who decide their future in university, especially in the first and second grade. For instance, when I decided to go to the university, I couldn't figure out what I really wanted to do. So it was a good time to think about it deeply while studying many subjects. Even if students get other kind of work after graduating from university, the knowledge which students get in university will be useful in their work. After graduating from university, I worked for one year in a car company. I studied how to use computers at university and I could use the knowledge in my work. For example, excel and power point were very useful to work.

On the other hand, for students who already decided what they wanted to do in the future, not specialized classes may not have any meaning. Students may think that they lose their precious time. However, if students work in some specific areas, they will know that people have to have wide knowledge not only about their interest. Because I study art for being an illustrator in the future now, I use my knowledge which I got at university for getting some ideas when I paint pictures. Everything is connected.

In conclusion, although specialized classes are meaningful for students, learning many kinds of things is more meaningful to make students' view wide.

REVISED ESSAY / Student 2

Some people think that students should take classes about many subjects while other people think that students should take only classes in specialized in one subject. **I believe that students should learn about a lot of subjects in university, although taking special classes is good for them. In this essay, I will indicate about my opinion.**

Firstly, students will have chances to get wide viewpoints if they take a lot of kinds of classes. **For example, I had been to a university for studying commerce. But I had to take French class for second foreign language and general education courses, such as English, literary history, and psychology in the first and second grade. After taking these classes, my interests spread widely.** I began to be interested in French deeply and I visited France twice when I was a student. **Moreover, the class of psychology was very interesting so that I began to read books about it by myself.** So taking various classes is a good thing for students to have interest widely.

Secondly, there are not so many students who decide their future in university, especially

in the first and second grade. **For instance, when I decided to go to university, I couldn't figure out if I really wanted to study commerce.** So it was a good time to think about it deeply while studying many subjects. **Actually, when I graduated from university, my interest changed from commerce to design for advertisement, because I could come in touch with art when I visited France. If I hadn't studied French at university, I wouldn't have visited there and there would not be a chance to find out what I really wanted to do.** So it is a good way of thinking about future to study many subjects.

On the other hand, for students who had already decided about their future, not specialized classes may not have any meaning. They may think that they lose precious time. However, if they work in some specific areas, they will know that people have to have wide knowledge and wide viewpoints, not only about their interest. **I study arts for being a designer of advertisement now in the school, and I use my knowledge which I got at university to make works for getting some ideas.** Wide knowledge is very useful to catch things deeply, because everything is connected.

In conclusion I agree with the opinion that students should learn a lot of things in the university, because learning various things is very meaningful for students to have their views wide and to decide their future.

Commentary on the first draft and revised essay by Student 2

Student 2's strengths in her revised essay are also the detail examples from her personal experience. She made explicit many subjects she studied and explained how these subjects were useful for her career. The sentences in the revised essay indicated by bold type show that her revised essay became more convincing than her first draft.

Promoting EFL Learner and Teacher Autonomy through Action Research: A Case of Collaborative and Reflective Supervision

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Abstract

The study of teacher autonomy and of its relationship to teachers' classroom practices has become a key theme in the field of language teaching and teacher education. In this case of collaborative and reflective supervision, I aimed to examine to what extent a graduate student (Teacher X), who had been teaching English at an upper secondary school for over fifteen years, could promote her students' autonomy and her own professional autonomy as a reflective practitioner and researcher through action research. Teacher X and I collaborated to implement action research in her classes to examine the effects of strategy-based instruction on her students. Teacher X not only helped her students to develop their positive attitudes towards language learning and their responsibility for their own learning, but also improved her instruction and promoted her own teacher cognition and autonomy through collaborative action research. Action research needs to be more developed in educational settings in Japan.

Introduction

As Bailey (2006) points out, one characteristic of the traditional prescriptive approach to teacher education was the teachers' lack of autonomy, contrasted with the supervisor's extreme autonomy. In recent years, however, I have noticed a gradual change in how we teacher educators look at teacher development and professionalism. In this trainee-centered in-service EFL teacher education program, the supervisor is no longer seen as the dominant source of expertise. In my collaborative and reflective supervision, I expected that Teacher X could be recognized as possessing a great deal of procedural and declarative knowledge, including knowledge about what and how to improve in her EFL instruction. Teacher X expected her students to develop more autonomy in their EFL learning. Although it might be almost impossible to introduce intensive learning strategy training to the curriculum, it would be possible to attempt this training in Teacher X's own classes. As her supervisor, I advised her to implement her action research project, which integrated various approaches, methods or techniques, such as strategy-based instruction, communication-oriented instruction, grammatical consciousness-raising, cooperative learning, students' reflective journals, teacher's field-notes, and peer teachers' observation. Autonomous teachers themselves might be responsible for developing their knowledge and beliefs about teaching. In this study, I collaborated with Teacher X in her action research, aiming to promote her students'

autonomy and her own professional development, and to consider some implications for teacher education in Japan.

Theoretical Background

Action research has gradually become known to Japanese teachers by name, but few of them tend to recognize the advantages/disadvantages of action research in language education through their own research experience. Criticisms of action research have generally focused on questions relating to its rigour and its recognizability as a valid research methodology. In contrast, the broad scope and flexibility of action research mean that its applications to the field of language teaching are potentially numerous. In this study, Teacher X would like to implement action research to improve her own classes and to promote her students' autonomy in EFL learning. My collaboration with her could perhaps facilitate her continuing professional development.

Action research is part of a broader movement in education associated with the concepts of "reflective practice" and "the teacher as researcher." It typically involves four broad phases, which form a continuing cycle or spiral of research: planning, action, observation, and reflection. As one of the innumerable definitions of action research that have been proposed, Wallace (1998, p.4) defines action research as a way of reflecting on one's teaching.

It is done by systematically collecting data on your everyday practice and analysing it in order to come to some decisions about what your future practice should be. This process is essentially what I mean by the term *action research*.

Action research in my teacher education program could be a powerful strategy for professional development. Teacher X used her observation and reflection to improve her own teaching practice and to promote her professional competence and autonomy.

Method

Purposes and Research Questions

The purposes of Teacher X's action research were to explore the factors regarding the development of a project for promoting her students' learner autonomy, and to examine the effects of strategy-based instruction on her students. The research questions were: (1) To what extent can Teacher X help her students to develop their positive attitudes towards language learning and their responsibility for their own learning? and (2) How can Teacher X integrate learning strategies in the classroom context in order to develop her students' English abilities? Moreover, as a collaborative supervisor, I aimed to develop Teacher X's

cognition and autonomy. My research question was: To what extent can Teacher X promote her professional autonomy through collaborative action research?

Participants and the Project Setting

The action research project was conducted in Teacher X's English I classes at an upper secondary school. There were 60 first-year students in the project, with false beginner to high beginner levels of English. The classes consisted of two general curriculum classes (labeled Class A and Class B) and one scientific & mathematics class (Class C). The length of class was 60 minutes. In the first lesson, Teacher X talked about what she was going to do in the strategy-based EFL classroom. She asked the participants for cooperation as her partners.

Preliminary Investigation

It may be significant for teachers to study what kinds of learners their students are, what goes on in their own classes, and what is needed there. In the first class in April the following surveys were carried out by Teacher X: a) Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a questionnaire about the students' interests in learning strategies and needs, and b) their life & career history. The content of the questions in SILL (in Japanese) was the same as that of the pilot study that she had carried out in the previous year in order to identify the first years' learning strategy use and some possible implications for further research. The students' life and career history was about when they started learning English and how they studied English in their lower secondary school days. The results showed that the students in that upper secondary school tended to have similar use of language strategies towards language learning. Regarding what they thought was important in EFL learning, the results were almost the same as those of the pilot study. The students thought that learners' attitudes towards EFL learning were the most important, followed by learning procedures and teaching methods. They knew that learners were central in learning English. It was necessary for Teacher X to develop a new approach to ELT, where learner-centeredness and learning process were highly valued.

Design of the Action Research Cycles

Teacher X and I planned to repeat two cycles. Before planning Cycle 1, I advised Teacher X to keep a journal or log and to have an objective point of view (Wallace 1998). Then her research topic or problem was chosen and narrowed down into a more realistic and manageable problem. The techniques for her collecting data could be observational techniques, and non-observational techniques, such as interviews, surveys & questionnaires,

student life & career histories, and student journals. In Cycle 1, as a reflective practitioner and researcher, Teacher X developed a plan based on learner strategy training, carried out the plan over an agreed period of time, observed the effects of the action, obtained as much information from the participants as possible, and reflected on her instruction. After Cycle 1, based on the revised plan, Cycle 2 was implemented as a continuing cycle of research.

Cycle 1 was carried out in the first semester: from the beginning of April to the middle of June. There were three English I classes a week and 22-26 classes in total. Teacher X and I had a meeting once a week and reflected on her research collaboratively. Following our specific plans, Teacher X a) had the students keep a journal, which could prompt them to record the learning process and help them to reflect on their own learning inside and outside the classroom; b) set a target learning strategy every class in order to develop the students' self-consciousness of learning strategies; c) conducted pair work and group work based on *cooperation*, which could be a social strategy to promote autonomous EFL learning through positive interdependence; d) made a handout of grammatical consciousness-raising tasks, which could be a learner-centered approach to grammar instruction; e) applied peer observation in order for self-observation to be more objective and for collegiality to be promoted at the school; and f) kept a record of every class in field-notes, which could help her to analyze a problem or to check an underlying problem later.

Cycle 2 was carried out from the middle of June to the end of September. The total of classes was 19-21. In Cycle 2, Teacher X and I made the following changes in journal writing and target learning strategies. Regarding journal writing, Teacher X did not instruct the students to use a specific learning strategy. She encouraged the students to set their own goal, and some of them chose a learning strategy that they had learned in Cycle 1. She also used the journal as a means of review of a class. She prepared a handout for reviewing the lesson at the end of each class. Moreover, Teacher X tried not to focus on learning strategies. Instead, she put learning strategies implicitly into a class. Without being presented with a target learning strategy, the students set their own goal for the class, and evaluated their learning. This was intended for fostering metacognitive learning strategies.

Findings and Discussion

After Cycles 1 and 2, Teacher X and I discussed the findings in order to answer her research questions. With regard to the research question (1): To what extent can Teacher X help her students to develop their positive attitudes towards language learning and their responsibility for their own learning?, in Cycle 1, most of the students could find that studying learning

strategies was a good means to understand English and to promote their own learning autonomously, and they tried some of the target learning strategies. By keeping a journal they could check the process of their strategy-based EFL learning. In Cycle 2, they used some of the learning strategies which they thought were useful even though they were not encouraged to use them. This fact might mean that most of the students could perhaps realize and internalize that using learning strategies was an easier, more helpful, and more effective way of learning English. Although some of the students had a variety of problems in language learning and needed to be helped by Teacher X individually, finally most of the students could show positive attitudes towards strategy-based instruction. They seemed not to have known how to study, but once they knew the way to make use of learning strategies, they were likely to motivate themselves and to succeed in developing their achievement.

The combination of metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies seemed to be the best. As a result of strategy training, the students could perhaps promote their capacity and willingness to take responsibility for their own learning. Journal writing contributed to the development of learner autonomy. Teacher X commented as follows:

Ninety percent of the students claimed to use journals as a review of the lessons at home. They learned how to control and record their learning by writing a journal and checking the process of learning. Journal writing contributed to the development of metacognitive strategies. Journal writing had the participants reflect on what and how they worked on English. As they got used to journal writing, they began to use a journal in their own way. This might mean that most of the students began to take responsibility for their own learning even outside the classroom.

Regarding the question (2): How can Teacher X integrate learning strategies in the classroom context in order to develop her students' English abilities?, in Cycle 1, all the mean scores of Teacher X's classes were higher than that of the total mean score of all first graders. In Cycle 2, judging from the mean scores, no difference could be seen between Teacher X's classes and the other classes. In Class A, however, some higher level students could improve their scores through their own hard work. Over half of the students in Classes B and C scored more than 60 points. The students' attitudes towards EFL learning were likely to change their achievement. Regarding the students who seemed to be dropping down, there might be various reasons. It might have been more difficult for them to master the instructional materials in Cycle 2 than those in Cycle 1. Some of them might have lost

their motivation to study hard since they had already attained their goal of passing the entrance examination. After the summer vacation, Teacher X needed to help her students in many ways. Of course, these achievement tests, which might have different features from those of proficiency tests, could not always measure the test takers' English abilities directly.

Most of the students in Teacher X's classes were eager to master effective learning strategies to improve their EFL learning and to develop their English abilities, even though not all of them could improve their scores in the achievement tests for all the first years. Teacher X taught only basic learning strategies to promote her students' EFL learning, but did not teach learning strategies which would lead to direct language skills, such as listening strategies, speaking strategies, reading strategies, and writing strategies. As Nunan (2000) suggests, there are two types of strategies: one for learning a target language and the other for using a target language. First of all, we thought that the students needed to learn basic learning strategies and how to control their learning for a certain term, and that it was appropriate for the first years at an upper secondary school to spend several months on training basic learning strategies. However, as they got used to learning strategies, it might have been better for them to be taught other learning strategies depending on their needs. The students sometimes appeared to want to know more about cognitive learning strategies. Such direct strategies for reading and writing would enable them to develop their English abilities.

In the following section, I answer my own research question: To what extent can Teacher X promote her professional autonomy through collaborative action research? Firstly, by analyzing her own daily lessons in action research, Teacher X could continuously raise her professional awareness. It might be almost impossible for Teacher X to be aware of everything during her instruction, but achieving awareness could be the first step for her in making a change. Keeping field-notes was one data-gathering activity through which Teacher X could gain awareness and express her attitudes. It was a regular activity which allowed her to record her experience and raise questions about the internal/external reality of her instruction.

Secondly, while respecting reflective teaching in the classroom, her analyses of her own lessons or her students' responses could be enforced, and her self-education might be promoted resulting in increased teacher autonomy. In reflective teaching the choices of what data to collect and how to collect data might rest with the individual teachers. Teacher X observed her teaching practices and her students' responses and collected a variety of data. I could promote this process and support her reflective endeavors. I encouraged her to use

the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection. To be critical about her own teaching, Teacher X had to own and control the process. Reflection could be verbalized and shared, but it was essentially personal. Through collaborative action research, which consisted of systematic, interactive, and collaborative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, Teacher X could improve her lessons and develop her teacher-learner autonomy as a reflective practitioner and researcher.

Thirdly, the effect of teacher training could increase through collaborative peer observation. As Brown (2001) suggests, one of the most neglected areas of professional growth among teachers might be the mutual exchange of classroom observation. In Japan, once Japanese teachers get into a teaching routine, it might be very difficult for them to make time to go and see other teachers and to invite the same in return. However, I advised Teacher X to employ peer observation in her action research based on the idea that seeing her actions through peers' eyes would be an indispensable tool for her classroom research as well as a potentially enlightening experience for both her and her peers. As a result, Teacher X could get some information that might be impossible to collect alone, deepen her reflection, and improve her instruction. Peer observation might be a good experience for her fellow teachers to breed a new sense of responsibility to support their peers and to promote innovation in EFL education at their school.

Finally, by organizing the supporting system between Teacher X and me, Teacher X's professional autonomy could be facilitated. Autonomy lies at the heart of teacher-supervisor relationships. In order to develop Teacher X's autonomy, I have helped her a) to become a reflective practitioner, b) to satisfy the learning needs of her students, c) to develop her own classroom skills, d) to evaluate her own teaching practice, and e) to take a large degree of responsibility for her own professional development. The empowerment of Teacher X depended in part on my recognizing that an effective and professionally prepared teacher should have a great deal of autonomy, in both decision-making and actions. We analyzed the data collaboratively at all stages in order to enhance her confidence and ability to reflect on her classroom practice.

Conclusion and Implications

In my collaborative and reflective supervision, I have examined how Teacher X reflected on and worked through problems in her teaching and could explore her teaching possibilities collaboratively, autonomously, and reflectively. Carr and Kemmis (1986) argue that action research can precipitate collaborative involvement in the research process, in which the research process can be extended to include all those involved in, or affected by, the action.

It might be significant to involve all the students to achieve the goal. I provided honest and meaningful feedback, and recognized her personal and professional beliefs and abilities.

It is necessary for us researchers to understand that the results of action research do not always lead to success. If the action has not effectively solved the problem, the action needs to be refined and reapplied or a different action needs to be taken. Several such cycles may be necessary before a satisfactory position is arrived at. Not all the trials may result in success, but those failures will give the teacher-researcher another opportunity to reconsider the plan through making every effort as a language teacher. In her action research, Teacher X reflected on her instruction in Cycle 1, and her refined action was applied to Cycle 2. It might be said that this process gave her another opportunity to promote her professional development.

I consider some implications of action research for Japanese teacher education. In Japan, there has been increasing interest in this research since the 1990s, but it has not become popular among EFL teachers yet. There have been few examples of teacher training making the best use of action research. It would be unwise to begin any discussion about getting started on action research without acknowledging that there might be a variety of constraints such as lack of time, lack of research skills, lack of resources, student disapproval, disapproval of colleagues, and school organizational features. The institutional circumstances and conditions in many schools might make it very difficult for teachers to carry out any form of classroom research. In spite of these constraints, considering the significance that classroom research has in Japanese teachers' professional development, all teachers might need to take some responsibility for researching their classroom work. This would be an important part of the teacher's profession in Japan.

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A network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping each other teach more effectively, the TE SIG has been active since 1993.

Our members teach at universities, high schools, and language centres both in Japan and other countries. The TE SIG focuses on five areas: action research, teacher reflection, peer-based development, teacher motivation, and teacher training and supervision.

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