

THE MASK



&

GAVEL

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Contents

Messages

Philip Head (Publications Chair) p. 4

David Kluge & Chhayankdhar Singh Rathore (SIG Co-coordinators) p. 5

Mask & Gavel Staff p. 6

Feature Articles

Matthew Barbee Page to Stage: An Empirical Study of Foreign Language Learning (FLL) and Motivation Through Playwriting, Readers Theatre, and Stage Production p. 7

Ma. Wilma Capati Incorporating Reader's Theater in Japanese University EFL Classrooms p. 34

Timothy Cook Videoconferencing Imitating Television in Foreign Language Instruction p. 53

Philip Head Genki: A Case Study of Benefits for Foreigners Producing Theatre in a Japanese Regional Dialect p. 70

Contents

Michael Walker Using Screenplays to Integrate Filmwork in the ESL
Classroom

p. 112

Book Reviews

Zach Strickland Review of *12 Short Plays for the Language Classroom
and Beyond!* by Chris Parham

p. 135

Announcements

p. 144

Welcome to Volume 10 of *Mask & Gavel*. This issue features a variety of articles that should prove useful for educators who wish to learn more about how to incorporate performance, whether drama, Reader's Theatre, or film, into their classroom practice.

First, **Matthew Barbee** gives an overview of how he has incorporated drama into his classroom and his students' perceptions about the experience. Next **Ma. Wilma Capati** discusses how using cultural knowledge of Japanese voice acting can be used to help engage learners in the use of Readers' Theatre. In addition, **Timothy Cook** demonstrates how the use of video-recorded dramas can help to improve online language learning. Moving outside of the classroom, **Philip Head** presents how community theatre in a local Japanese dialect affects foreign participants' language learning and community integration, while also examining the motivation of participants to join and their overall experience. Returning to film, **Michael Walker** examines how writing screenplays can add context that may be missing from standard textbook dialogues and form the basis for a film production task that can incorporate many useful English language and communication skills. Finally, **Zach Strickland** reviews *12 Short Plays for the Language Classroom and Beyond!* by Chris Parham.

As always, I would like to thank all the reviewers and editorial staff (especially co-editor **Robin Read** and assistant editor **Darren Kinsman**) who volunteered their time and expertise to help make this publication as good as possible.

Philip Head

JALT PIE SIG Publications Chair

Happy tenth birthday, PIE SIG!

In 2010, a colleague and I were interested in forming a performance in education Special Interest Group for JALT. We got three other JALT members to agree to become officers, adopted a generic constitution, created a petition to start a new SIG, and got 30 people to sign it at JALT2010. We submitted the petition to the JALT Board of Directors in 2011 and the Speech, Drama, & Debate SIG, later to be called the Performance in Education SIG, was born. Ten years ago, the SIG began with a focus on the many aspects of speech, drama, and debate. Today, we have evolved to accommodate other performance in education genres such as music, rap, spoken word poetry, traditional Japanese performing arts, and dance in education.

In this journey to establish our identity, we have had several highpoints. In 2018, we sponsored a traveling conference held in Okinawa, Kansai, Tokai, Kanto, and Sapporo. We always had some element of student presentations in our conferences, but starting in 2019 we instituted a Student Showcase, and in 2020 and 2021 we added a Student Film Festival to our conferences. We have invited many well-known international speakers at our events, including Carolyn Graham, Ken Wilson, and Rod Ellis, but we have also invited excellent domestic speakers such as Vivian Bussinguer-Khavari and Dawn Kobayashi.

We did not do all of this by ourselves. The Performance in Education SIG is a hub of creativity and dynamism that not only connects with a wide audience through multiple conferences and events that are organized in collaboration with other SIGs and chapters but also continues to evolve. We have collaborated with the Critical Thinking and Mind, Brain, and Education SIGs, as well as the Okinawa, Yokohama, and Hokkaido chapters.

Most importantly, we evolved joyously. Our networking events were special occasions that helped create a home for the performing arts in JALT, where we are free to present and publish, to commune with like-minded people. This 10th volume of *Mask & Gavel* continues in our proud tradition of excellent publications. This celebration of our first ten years of accomplishments makes us look forward to what lies in store for us in the next ten years.

David Kluge and Chhayankdhar Singh Rathore

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Feature Articles

Page to Stage: An Empirical Study of Foreign Language Learning (FLL) and Motivation Through Playwriting, Readers Theatre, and Stage Production

Matthew Barbee

Doshisha University

Abstract

This article describes a set of lessons used in a university EFL course and presents empirical, classroom-based research. The set of lessons, *Page to Stage*, was designed to teach English through the use of drama, dramatic activities, and theatre production—more specifically: dramatic adaptation of Japanese folktales, playwriting, readers theatre, and the rehearsal, memorization, and performance of original, student-written plays. At the end of the lesson and course, students were surveyed on their beliefs regarding the lesson's effects on their motivation, level of English, use of prosody, and confidence when speaking in public. The students' enjoyment of certain aspects of the lesson as well as the lesson as a whole was also surveyed. Results showed that the students saw self-improvement along all points, while they feel that their motivation and use of prosody improved most. Regarding enjoyment, students most enjoyed (from most enjoyable to least enjoyable) watching other students perform, working together in groups, using Japanese folktales as reference for the playwriting, the readers theatre, the final performance, and playwriting. Students least enjoyed memorizing the scripts in preparation for the final performances. Based on the results, a case is made for the benefits of drama, readers theatre, and theatre production in the EFL classroom.

Introduction

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.
(Shakespeare, n.d. *As You Like It*, Act 2, Sc. 7, lines 46-49)

With a background in theatre and English literature, I enter every classroom with a similar sentiment: every classroom is a *stage*, and every student is an *actor* with the potential to *play many parts* and communicate in any situation.

As language teachers, we often find ourselves with the seemingly unsurmountable goal of engaging our students with a variety of authentic situations and opportunities to communicate. While this task could easily be overcome in English as a second language (ESL) environments where students are surrounded by native speakers of the target language, language teachers in English as a foreign language (EFL) or foreign language learning (FLL) contexts—contexts practically void of such interactions—must often recreate experiences that promote interaction and communication in our classrooms. According to Richard Via in *The Magic 'if' of Theatre*, “few would disagree that drama has at last established itself as a means of helping people learn another language. A great deal of our everyday learning is acquired through experience, and in the language classroom drama fulfills that experiential need” (1987, p. 110). As a language teacher who strives to create both autonomous and confident learners, I utilize the benefits of theatre to facilitate language experiences in which students use and rely on English as a tool rather than just studying it (Bang, 2003; Barnes, 1968; Hismanoglu, 2005; Livingstone, 1983; Via, 1976, 1987; Zafeiriadou, 2009).

Beyond the experiential benefits of drama, Maley and Duff (1978, p. 1-10, 2011, p. 1-2) put forth eleven additional benefits of using drama in the language classroom. They are as follows:

1. Drama integrates the four language skills in authentic ways: Careful listening and spontaneous verbal expression is integral.

2. Drama integrates verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication [physical and intellectual].
3. Drama integrates cognitive and affective domains [feeling and thinking].
4. Drama contextualizes language through a focus on meaning.
5. Drama is holistic and presents opportunities for catering to learner differences.
6. Drama fosters self-awareness (and awareness of others), self-esteem, and confidence.
7. The variety and the unpredictable nature of drama fosters and sustains motivation.
8. Drama allows for the transfer of responsibility for learning from teacher to learners.
9. Drama encourages an open, exploratory, and risk-taking environment where creativity and imagination can develop.
10. Drama has a positive effect on classroom dynamics and atmosphere.
11. Drama is low resource.

With these benefits in mind, my approach to English language teaching has always revolved around using drama and dramatic activities.

What is Drama?

In essence, drama is what is created when a person interacts with another person. Via (1987) defines drama as communication between two people, while Holden (1981) insists that drama is always present when people interact and must include the communication of meaning between the two participants. It is this aspect of drama that I am most interested in when implementing it in my language classes.

What is Theatre?

As opposed to drama, theatre is concerned with an audience in mind (Holden, 1981; Via 1976). According to Via (1987), theatre is “communication between people for the benefit of other people” (p. 110). And, like drama, theatre is also concerned with the conveyance of meaning, both between the participants, and the participants and the audience. In short, theatre is drama for the sake of an audience.

Dramatic Activities in the Classroom

Dramatic activities are any activities that engage students in both drama and theatre. Within the context of the language classroom, the benefits of both drama and theatre coincide with the basic concepts of several holistic methods of language teaching including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-based Learning (TBL), and Total Physical Response (TPR) (Barbee, 2016; Davies, 1990). Nina Spada (2007) states that CLT validates drama as pedagogy in the language classroom, writing that CLT is “a meaning-based, learner-centered approach to L2 teaching where fluency is given priority over accuracy and the emphasis is on the comprehension and production of messages” (p. 272). In effect, learners become active participants in the language learning, and teachers facilitate self-learning and group interaction in authentic situations. The facilitation of authentic situations for communication is also an aspect of TBL, where students use English as a tool to complete the task rather than focus directly on the language itself. TPR comes into play because of the physical nature of dramatic activities. Because the entire body can be involved, from movement and body language to gestures and facial expressions, dramatic activities promote the concept of language use and learning through action (Davies, 1990).

Dramatic activities in the classroom can include but are not limited to mime, simulation, role-playing, improvisation, teacher-in-role, playwriting, and various types of theatre performances from monologues and scenes to readers theatre and full productions (Barbee, 2016; Davies, 1990). While the simpler dramatic activities from mime to improvisation are very low resource, i.e., they only require a room of human beings (Maley & Duff, 1978), using the more involved forms of theatre, including full theatre production, in an English class with second language learners can come with limitations from student motivation and level of English ability to space, policy constraints, and time (Barbee, 2016). Because of the limitations with time especially, I have rarely staged full theatre productions in my classes. Earlier in my teaching career, I reconciled not attempting such performances due to the belief that the value of dramatic activities in the classroom lies in the process not the product (Maley & Duff, 2011; Zafeiriadou, 2009). However, as Davies (1990) puts it, “if rehearsed drama activities are left unperformed, there may be a sense of incompleteness in the class” (p. 87). Colleen Ryan-Schuetz and Laura M. Colangelo (2004) also defend the use of full theatre production in language classes, stating that they give students

contextualized and authentic experiences using English in a variety of communicative activities including textual analysis and discussion, rehearsals, performances, and post-production reflections. With the intent of adding these benefits of full theatre production to one of my classes, I designed an EFL course and set of lessons that take students through the process of story analysis and playwriting, to readers theatre and a full theatre production. Because it is rare for such activities to be the focus of a language class (Davies, 1990; Ng, 2008), I also wanted to investigate the beliefs of the students after the final performance of the lesson. The research questions, the course, and the lesson are described below.

Research Questions

This classroom-based, action research seeks to investigate the following two research questions:

1. What are the students' beliefs and perceptions regarding the lesson's effects on their motivation, level of English, use of prosody, and confidence when speaking in public?
2. Because the lesson is multi-faceted, which aspects of the lesson, including the lesson as a whole, do students find enjoyable and to what extent?

These questions are investigated using an action research approach and a survey that was devised and implemented at the end of the course. Because of the nature of action research—the goal being simply to understand the effects of teaching on students (Johnson, 2012)—there is no experimental or control group, no variable is independent or dependent, and most importantly, there are no hypotheses to support. As teacher and researcher, my goal is to study the effects of my teaching and then adjust and improve my lessons for the benefit of my future classes and students.

Quantitative data was gathered through a post-lesson survey conducted in English and Japanese from 19 of the 20 students enrolled in the class. The survey consists of twelve 5-point Likert-scale questions (1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = indifferent, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). Questions 1 to 4 address research question 1. Survey questions 5 through 12 address research question 2. The twelve survey questions are listed below:

1. I feel more motivated to learn and use English because of this lesson.

2. I feel that my overall level of English improved because of this lesson.
3. I feel that my use of the prosodic and non-verbal features of English improved because of this lesson.
4. I feel more confident when speaking English in public because of this lesson.
5. I enjoyed this lesson overall.
6. I enjoyed using Japanese folktales as a reference for playwriting.
7. I enjoyed playwriting.
8. I enjoyed reading the play for the readers theatre performance.
9. I enjoyed memorizing the script.
10. I enjoyed performing on stage for the final performance.
11. I enjoyed watching the other students perform their plays.
12. I enjoyed working with my group to write and perform our play.

Qualitative data was also gathered in the form of informal teacher observations during the weekly class meetings. Informal notes were taken regarding student interactions, language use, and perceived motivation. Information from these observations will be presented as they relate to survey findings in the discussion section of this paper. Students were also asked to complete an end-of-semester class evaluation and a reflection assignment; however, those results are not discussed within the scope of this paper because they cover the entire course as opposed to just the *Page to Stage* lessons.

It should also be noted that students completed the surveys anonymously and gave written and oral permission for survey results and observations to be used in this research. Students also gave permission for their scripts and performance videos to be shown publicly and to future classes of students.

Course Description

Working at a private university in central Japan, I created an intensive EFL course titled *English Practicum 2: English through Theatre*. The course is held in the fall semester each year and meets twice a week across 15 weeks for 90 minutes each class. In total, that comes to 30

classes and 45 classroom hours. Department policy regarding *Practicum 2* classes requires that admitted students be high-intermediate to advanced English learners with the maximum number of students set at 20. English level is determined, and students are selected based on standardized English test scores and an interview screening. First, students are required to have a score of 750 or higher on the TOEIC test. Scores are self-reported by the students who submit printed copies of their official TOEIC scores to the department administration. Once scores are confirmed to meet the TOEIC requirement, students are invited to be interviewed by me. Each *Practicum 2* course instructor conducts their own subjective interviews. For the interviews, I screen for observable enthusiasm, a desire to perform in front of others, self-motivation, and a conversational level of English. The course description as written in the course syllabus (Barbee, 2018) is as follows:

This class will focus on learning English through drama, dramatic activities, and theatre performance. Students must be able to speak loudly and clearly in a public setting. Because students will be asked to perform English with each other using gestures, body language, and emotional expression, students must use COMPASSION, COOPERATION, and CREATIVITY in order to be successful. Class activities will include monologue performance, scene performance, improvisation, role-playing, watching videos of theatre performances, reading aloud, playwriting, and theatre performance. Students will be evaluated on attendance, class participation, group cooperation, live performances, and homework activities.

As listed in the syllabus, there are eight student learning objectives. By the end of the class, students should be able to:

1. Respond appropriately in a variety of situations when interacting with others in English.
2. Effectively communicate in English with a loud and clear voice.
3. Effectively integrate prosodic and other non-verbal features of English including prosody, body language, and emotional expression.
4. Demonstrate a comprehensible level of English pronunciation and intonation.
5. See an increase in their motivation to learn and use English.
6. See an increase in their overall level of English.

7. See an improvement in their use of the prosodic and non-verbal features of English.
8. See an improvement in their self-esteem and confidence when speaking English in front of others.

Student learning objectives 1 to 4 are measured throughout the course using informal and formal assessment methods including observation, objective completion of written activities, objective and subjective performance of spoken activities, and formative and summative evaluations. Student learning objectives 5 to 8 are measured through informal observation and student responses to their reflection assignment and class evaluation at the end of the semester. Again, results of the reflection assignment and class evaluation as well as the formative and summative evaluations are not within the scope of this paper.

Lesson Procedure

While I have had the experience of producing many fully-staged plays and musicals with costumes, staging, and months of rehearsals, time for such lessons is hard to come by and they are rare in the language classroom as I mentioned before. With the availability of time (45 classroom hours, 30 classes across 15 weeks), I created a 10-week set of lessons (from here referred to as *Page to Stage*) that would have students write scripts, rehearse, and memorize dramatic scenes on stage by the end of the course. The *Page to Stage* lessons began in week 6 of the 15-week course. Activities within the first five weeks of the course prior to the *Page to Stage* lessons included self-introduction adlib and storytelling, monologue performances (pre-written), two-person scene performances (pre-written), improvisational games, and team-building activities. The three main activities of the *Page to Stage* lessons include (a) scene and one-act play writing, (b) a readers theatre performance, and (c) a final group performance of the one-act plays. An overview of the 15-week *Page to Stage* lesson plan can be seen in Appendix A.

As the *Page to Stage* lessons began, students were first given an introduction to playwriting, components of the dramatic story arc (exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution), and were asked to read and analyze several Western fairy tales. The list of the Western fairy tales can be seen in Appendix B. The story analysis activity

required students to read three Western fairytales of their choice from the list and identify the components of the dramatic story arc. Also in week 1, students were introduced to the prosodic features of speech (stress, pitch, intonation, pauses, pace, loudness, paralinguistic features, and vocal effect). This introduction was made through a lecture, *Prosodic Features of Speech: An Intro to Prosody*, that I created for the purposes of the class (a video of the lecture (Barbee, 2020) that I made in the second year of the course can be seen at <https://youtu.be/CQwWI5-rzH8>).

Scene and One-Act Writing

Students began to plan and write their individual scenes in week 7 and continued through week 8. Before writing their scenes, students divided themselves into groups of four and were given five traditional Japanese stories to choose from. The stories were found in several anthologies of English and bilingual (English and Japanese) Japanese folktales (a full list of the folktales and anthologies can be seen in Appendix C). Because each story had several, very different versions available, I decided to give each group four to five versions of the same story. This allowed students to compare each version—students found differences and similarities through reading and story analysis—and synthesize their own version while keeping the main aspects of the story similar to the original. The five Japanese folktales used for the lesson were:

1. *Kachi Kachi Yama* [Click Clack Mountain]
2. *Urashimataro* [The Fisherman and the Tortoise]
3. *Bunbuku Chagama* [Lucky Cauldron]
4. *Saru Kani Gassen* [Monkey-and-Crab Fight]
5. *Shitakiri Suzume* [The Tongueless Sparrow]

A list of the multiple versions of the five Japanese folktales used for reference in the scene writing activity can be seen in Table 1. Once chosen, groups read and discussed their folktales, and then divided the stories into equal sections per member. The students then adapted their section of each fairytale into dramatic scenes. When writing their scenes, students were encouraged to modernize or update their stories for contemporary audiences. At this point in the lesson, there was

also a class discussion regarding adding stage directions and prosodic markers such as tone, pace, loudness, emotional markers, and so on to their scenes. The individual scenes were due in week 8, and groups then combined the scenes into complete one-act plays. Students worked together to self-edit and make changes to their group’s overall scripts. Groups submitted their one-act plays, I edited them further for minor language and continuity errors, and I then compiled them all into a class manuscript. The reason I choose to produce a class manuscript of all the plays is to show each group what the other groups have written and to create a sense of class cohesion and pride in their work (Full compilations of the one-act plays are on the webpage, *Page to Stage: An EFL through Theatre Lesson* (Barbee, n.d.), at https://www.matthewbarbee.com/page_to_stage.html. The 2019 compilation can be seen at https://www.matthewbarbee.com/uploads/1/6/8/9/16895428/2019_student_dramatic_folktales.pdf (Barbee, 2019)).

Table 1

Japanese Folktales Used for Reference in the Scene Writing Activity

List of Folktales	Anthology	Language Format
Click-Clack Mountain (Kachi-kachi yama)	A Treasury of	English and Japanese
Fisherman and the Tortoise (Urashimataro)	Japanese	(side-by-side)
Lucky Cauldron (Bunbuku Chagama)	Folktales	Suggested for beginning-
Monkey-and-Crab Fight	(Illustrated,	intermediate English learners
Tongue-Cut Sparrow	Bilingual	
	Edition)	
The Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab	Japanese Fairy	English
The Story of Urashima Taro, the Fisher Lad	Tales	Suggested for advanced
The Farmer and the Badger		English learners
The Tongue-Cut Sparrow		
Click Click Mountain	Japanese Folk	English and Japanese
The Kettle of Happiness	Tales (Vol. 1-5)	(with English to Japanese
The Monkey and the Crab		dictionary, English Audio
		CD included)

The Tongueless Sparrow		Suggested for beginning
Urashimataro		English learners
A Sparrow with Her Tongue Cut Out	Long Ago	English and Japanese
Kachi Kachi Mountain	Stories of Japan	(side-by-side)
Monkey vs. Crab	(Bilingual	Suggested for intermediate
Urashima Taro	Edition)	English learners
Bunbuku Teakettle	Once Upon a	English
Click-Clack Mountain	Time in Japan	(with English to Japanese
The Monkey and the Crabs	(Vol. 1-3)	dictionary)
The Sparrow's Tongue		Suggested for beginning-
Urashimataro		intermediate English learners

Note. Suggested English level is based on informal observations from the teacher. See reference section for anthology publication information.

Readers Theatre

Readers theatre is defined by Patrick Chin Leong Ng (2008) as “an oral presentation of drama, prose, or poetry, by two or more readers . . . for an intended audience” (p. 93) and has a positive effect on students’ communication skills (Ng, 2008). Within *Page to Stage*, the readers theatre portion of the lessons has students assign roles within their group and read their completed one-act plays in front of the other members of the class. Readers theatre was included in the set of lessons for several reasons. It is my hope that the readers theatre performances would:

1. allow students to familiarize themselves with their scripts
2. allow students to focus on prosody and other non-verbal aspects of language without the stress of memorization and a full-body commitment
3. lead to natural discussions of prosody and its connection to meaning
4. facilitate practice of oral communication skills, such as pronunciation, articulation, and volume, and lead to greater confidence (Ng, 2008)
5. allow for public praise and acknowledgment from other groups
6. instill cohesion and group pride in the scripts students had just written

On the day of the readers theatre performances, chairs were arranged in a large circle and groups sat together along the circle. Groups then took turns reading their one-act scripts. Because some scripts had more characters than there were group members, some roles were doubled up. As groups finished reading their scripts, time was allowed for praise, questions, and constructive feedback from myself and other students.

Theatre Production

After receiving formal and informal feedback for their readers theatre performances, groups began preparing for the final theatre production. Tasks involved in the preparation for final performances included casting, read-through, blocking (the physical mapping of the movement on stage), independent rehearsal, teacher-guided rehearsal, costuming, set arrangement, and memorization. Through each task, students used English to discuss ideas, direct each other, follow teacher direction, and perform.

On the two days of the final performances in weeks 14b and 15a, students arrived in class early for vocal warmups and set up the classroom for audience seating. Groups took turns performing their plays and performances were video recorded. Performances were recorded for scoring purposes and for student self-reflection. Student performances were scored using a descriptive rubric and written feedback in the form of comments on the rubric was given. Students were also tasked with providing written, peer feedback in the form answering what they most enjoyed about each groups' performance and how they could improve. Sample videos of the one-act plays can be found on the webpage, *Page to Stage: An EFL through Theatre Lesson* (Barbee, n.d.), at https://www.matthewbarbee.com/page_to_stage.html.

On the last day of class (week 15b), students were asked to complete the end-of-lesson survey and class evaluation. The results from the end-of-lesson survey are presented below.

Results

Results of the survey (as seen in Table 2, Table 3) are reflective of students' perceptions of the effectiveness and enjoyment of different aspects of the *Page to Stage* lesson. Perceived effectiveness of the lesson was measured along four points, (a) increased motivation to learn and use English, (b) improvement in overall level of English, (c) improved use of the prosodic and non-verbal features of English speaking, and (d) increased confidence when speaking in public.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Student Responses to Likert-Scale Survey Statements

Survey Statement	M	SD
1. I feel more motivated to learn and use English because of this lesson.	4.42	0.61
2. I feel that my overall level of English improved because of this lesson.	3.84	0.76
3. I feel that my use of the prosodic and non-verbal features of English improved because of this lesson.	4.16	0.69
4. I feel more confident when speaking English in public because of this lesson.	3.68	0.82
5. I enjoyed this lesson overall.	4.74	0.45
6. I enjoyed using Japanese folktales as a reference for playwriting.	4.21	0.79
7. I enjoyed playwriting.	3.37	1.12
8. I enjoyed reading the play for the readers theatre performance.	4.05	0.97
9. I enjoyed memorizing the script.	2.32	1.06
10. I enjoyed performing on stage for the Final Performance.	3.95	0.97
11. I enjoyed watching the other students perform their plays.	4.74	0.56
12. I enjoyed working with my group to write and perform our play.	4.68	0.67

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = indifferent, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Table 3*Frequencies of Student Responses to Likert-Scale Survey Statements*

Survey Statement	Total Agree	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	Total Disagree
		%	%	%	%	%	
Q1	94.7	47.4	47.4	5.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Q2	63.2	21.1	42.1	36.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Q3	84.2	31.6	52.6	15.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Q4	57.9	15.8	42.1	36.8	5.3	0.0	5.3
Q5	100.0	73.7	26.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Q6	78.9	42.1	36.8	21.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Q7	52.6	15.8	36.8	15.8	31.6	0.0	31.6
Q8	68.4	42.1	26.3	26.3	5.3	0.0	5.3
Q9	15.8	0.0	15.8	26.3	31.6	26.3	57.9
Q10	84.2	26.3	57.9	0.0	15.8	0.0	15.8
Q11	94.7	78.9	15.8	5.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Q12	89.5	78.9	10.5	10.5	0.0	0.0	0.0

Note: (5) = strongly agree, (4) = agree, (3) = indifferent, (2) = disagree, (1) = strongly disagree.

The survey statement numbers, Q1 – Q12, refer the same respective survey statements in Table 2.

According to the results, the highest percentage of students at 94.74% strongly agreed or agreed that the lesson increased their motivation to learn and use English with a mean score of 4.42 ($SD = 0.61$) on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The second highest aspect regarding lesson effectiveness dealt with students' beliefs that their use of prosody and non-

verbal features of English improved showing that 84.21% of students strongly agreed or agreed with this point ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.69$). While still positive, but a little lower, a majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that their level of English and confidence in public speaking increased as well (63.16% and 57.89% respectively).

Overall, students answered that they enjoyed the *Page to Stage* lessons as a whole ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.45$) with 100% of students answering positively. Students equally enjoyed watching the final stage performances with a 94.74% positive response ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.56$) and working together in groups (89.47% positive, $M = 4.68$, $SD = 0.67$). Regarding the enjoyment of the different activities within the lesson, students most enjoyed using the Japanese folktales as a reference for playwriting ($M = 4.21$), the readers theatre ($M = 4.05$), and the staging the final performance ($M = 3.95$) in order of most enjoyable. In general, students seemed divided regarding the activity of playwriting ($M = 3.37$), with a total of 52.63% of students answering that they enjoyed it, while a total of 47.37% of students did not; 15.79% of students were indifferent. The activity that students least enjoyed, with a score of 2.32, was memorizing the scripts. Just under 60% of students said that they strongly disliked or disliked having to memorize the final performances.

Discussion

In presenting my data, I must be careful to say that due to the nature of action research and the small sample size of this study ($n = 19$) results cannot be generalized (Johnson, 2012). However, I do believe that such discussions are important within the greater conversation of the pedagogical value of theatre in the classroom.

From the results of the survey, students overwhelmingly enjoyed the *Page to Stage* lessons, as well as watching other students perform and working together in groups. Meanwhile, students less enjoyed playwriting and memorization. As a teacher, I am glad to see that the students enjoyed the lesson, but I could have predicted that they would least appreciate writing and memorization. Even in my nondramatic English classes, students also tend to cringe when it comes to writing and memorization. Results show that these aspects of the *Page to Stage* lesson—perhaps all classes in general—could be improved for students. The lesson also had positive effects on the motivation,

English speaking ability, and confidence of my students, but there is certainly still room for improvement.

While practically unquantifiable, qualitative data from observations show that the amount of English used outside of the direct performances, was greater than during the performances, which was the goal and reason for including theatre production in the set of lessons. Like the goal of task-based learning, I intended for students to use English not for the sake of learning English, but rather as a means to complete a task, or set of tasks (Davies, 1990; Ryan-Shuetz & Colangelo, 2004), which in this case was the set of tasks leading to the readers theatre and the final performances in front of audiences. It was amazing to watch students immerse themselves in the minutiae of character and story analysis while also discussing the best side of the stage for a character to enter. In one particular class, students spent close to 45 minutes debating how to have their *tanuki* (a magical character in one of the plays) transform from a teakettle into said *tanuki*. The time for class instruction had to be shortened in the end, but the experience of having that debate and using English organically was priceless.

It should be noted here that most of the English used in class was not used while the students were seated behind desks. After the readers theatre performances, students almost never used their chairs or desks for the rest of the semester. In many language classrooms, students often complete assignments and have conversations seated behind desks. These types of interactions certainly exist outside of the classroom, but I would be remiss to say that life happens behind a desk. During the rehearsal process, students were free to move around the classroom and express themselves physically. From my observations, it is this aspect of theatre and working together in groups that students most enjoyed. Rarely would students become boisterous and “loud” while sitting, but once they were allowed to use their entire range of physical expression, the classroom became alive with energy, excitement, and, most importantly, language. Perhaps the anxiety and natural pressure of performing on a stage prevented some students from fully enjoying acting in the final performances (Ryan-Schuetz & Colangelo, 2004), but from my observations those anxieties were rarely seen when rehearsing without an audience.

While the scope of this study does not cover students’ perceived anxieties, it does show that students most enjoyed watching the final performances and working together in groups.

Dornyei (1994) presents the idea of *group specific motivational components* in which emphasis is placed on group activities as a strong motivational factor for students. In the EFL classroom, having students set objectives and committing to them requires students to work together, and hopefully creates a sense of unity where students feel like they are supporting their classmates and being supported by them. This group cohesion is a motivating factor for students (Dornyei, 1994), and it is this sense of group cohesion and togetherness that I strove to achieve across every aspect of the lesson.

Conclusion

Ultimately, while more empirical studies should be conducted, the benefits and positive effects of drama and theatre activities for language learners is clear. Drama allows students to be themselves as it draws on their natural instincts to be expressive and communicate with the world around them. Perhaps all classrooms can be stages and all students actors, but this does not always happen organically. As language teachers in FLL classrooms, it is up to us to facilitate such experiences, and drama, in its ability to enhance established curriculum and engage students in a virtual experience in authentic language, can be the vehicle to do just that.

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Appendix A*Page to Stage Lesson Plan*

Week	Assignment/Activity	Type of Activity
6a	Introduction to scene writing	lecture
	Introduction to dramatic story arc and character development	reading/reading-a-loud worksheet activity ^a
	Read Western fairytales and story analysis	
6b	Introduction to prosody, Prosody activity	lecture
	Make groups and select Japanese folktales	listening/speaking reading
7a	Plan dramatic adaptations of Japanese folktales	group discussion ^b
	Begin writing adapted dramatic scenes individually	writing
7b	Continue writing adapted scenes individually	writing
	Discussion: Adding prosody and stage directions to a script	group discussion ^b listening/speaking
8a	DUE: Scene writing	lecture
	Group editing workshop	group discussion ^b
	Make corrections to scenes	writing
	Combine scenes into one-act plays	
8b	Watch: Movie of a live stage performance (1a)	watching a video/listening
	Discussion: Scene excerpt with stage directions	group discussion ^b worksheet activity ^a
9a	Watch: Movie of a live stage performance (1b)	watching a video/listening
	DUE: Final one-act plays	
	Teacher edits the one-act plays ^c	
9b	Teacher returns final one-act plays manuscript ^c	lecture
	Introduction to readers theatre, first read-through	reading/reading-a-loud

10a	Prosody activity Rehearsal: Readers Theatre	group discussion ^b listening/speaking rehearsal ^d
10b	Performance: READERS THEATRE	group performance (unmemorized)
11a	Introduction to final performance Casting and read-through Rehearsal: Group one-act plays	lecture rehearsal ^d memorization
11b	Watch: Movie of a live stage performance (2a) Rehearsal: Group one-act plays	watching a video/listening worksheet activity ^a rehearsal ^d memorization
12a	Watch: Movie of a live stage performance (2b) Rehearsal: Group one-act plays	watching a video/listening worksheet activity ^a rehearsal ^d memorization
12b	Rehearsal: Group one-act plays (teacher guided)	rehearsal ^d memorization
13a	Rehearsal: Group one-act plays (teacher guided)	rehearsal ^d memorization
13b	DUE: Movie reports (x2) Discussion of movie reports Rehearsal: Group one-act plays	group discussion ^b rehearsal ^d memorization
14a	Final Rehearsal: Group one-act plays	rehearsal ^d memorization
14b	Performance: GROUP ONE-ACT PLAYS	group performance (memorized)
15a	Performance: GROUP ONE-ACT PLAYS	group performance (memorized)

15b	Lesson and Class Evaluation	evaluation survey
	Reflection and Discussion	post-survey discussion

Note. There is some overlap in the exact type of activity due to some activities involving multiple language skills. **Bold text** indicates points of formal student evaluation.

^a worksheet activities include both formal and informal writing activities, they generally include reading comprehension, practical application, and critical thinking questions.

^b group discussions include all group members (4-5 members per group). Language skills include listening, speaking, and discussion.

^c activities in which the teacher is solely responsible.

^d rehearsals include all group members (4-5 students per group). Language skills include listening, speaking and discussion.

Appendix B

Play Adaptations of Western Fairytales

List of Fairytales	Anthology	Language Format	Pub. Info.
Chicken Licken	Fairytales	English	Meighan, J.
Goldilocks	on Stage		(2016). <i>Fairytales</i>
Humpty Dumpty		(short plays	<i>on stage: a</i>
Little Red Riding Hood		based on	<i>collection of</i>
The Elves and the Shoemaker		Western fairy	<i>children's plays</i>
The Enormous Turnip		tales)	<i>based on famous</i>
The Gingerbread Man			<i>fairy tales. Jem</i>
The Lazy Cow		Suggested for	Books.
The Little Red Ren		intermediate	
The Magic Porridge Pot		English learners	
The Pied Piper of Hammelin			
The Stone Soup			
The Talking Tree			
The Three Gilly Goats Gruff			
The Three Little Pigs			
The Ugly Ducking			

Note. Suggested English level is based on informal observations from the teacher.

Appendix C*Japanese Folktales Used for Reference in the Lesson*

List of Folktales	Book Title	Language Format	Pub. Info.
Click-Clack Mountain (Kachi-kachi yama) *	A Treasury	English and	Yasuda, Y.
Fisherman and Tortoise (Urashimataro) *	of Japanese	Japanese	(2010). A
Lucky Cauldron (Bunbuku Chagama) *	Folktales	(side-by-side)	<i>treasury of</i>
Luminous Princess	(Illustrated,		<i>Japanese</i>
Marriage of a Mouse	Bilingual	Suggested for	<i>folktales</i> . Tuttle
Monkey-and-Crab Fight *	Edition)	beginning-	Publishing.
Old Man Who Made Trees Blossom		intermediate	
Old Men with Wens		English learners	
One-Inch Boy (Issunboshi)			
Peach Boy (Momotaro)			
Strong Boy (Kintaro)			
Tongue-Cut Sparrow *			
How an Old Man Lost His Wen	Japanese	English	Ozaki, Y. T.
Story of the Son of a Peach	Fairy Tales		(Ed.). (1970).
My Lord Bag of Rice		Suggested for	<i>Japanese fairy</i>
The Adventures of Kintaro		advanced English	<i>tales</i> . Tuttle
The Bamboo-Cutter and the Moonchild		learners	Publishing.
The Goblin of Adachigahara			
The Happy Hunter and the Skillful Fisher			
The Jelly Fish and The Monkey			
The Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab *			
The Sagacious Monkey and the Boar			
The South Pointing Carriage			
The Stones of Five Colors and the Empress			
The Story of Prince Yamato Take			

The Story of Princess Hase

The Man who Did Not Wish to Die

The Story of the Old Man and Flowers

The Story of Urashima Taro *

The Farmer and the Badger *

The Tongue-Cut Sparrow *

The White Hare and The Crocodiles

A Crane's Gratitude	Japanese	English and	Woodward, B.
Amazake (Sweet Rice Wine)	Folk Tales	Japanese	(Ed.). (2005).
Click Click Mountain *	(Vol. 1-5)		<i>Nihon mukashi</i>
Dumpling Scaredy Cat		(with English to	<i>banashi</i>
Mouse Wrestling		Japanese	[Japanese folk
No Face		dictionary)	tales] (Vol. 1).
Old Man Blossom			The Japan Times.
Old People's Mountain		(English Audio	
One Inch		CD included)	
Peach Boy			
Runny Nose		Suggested for	
The Carrot, the Burdock, and the Radish		beginning	
The Farting Wife		English learners	
The Kappa for Rain			
The Kettle of Happiness *			
The Man with the Lump			
The Monkey and the Crab *			
The Mouse's Wedding			
The Princess of the Moon			
The Stone Buddhas			
The Tiger in the Screen			
The Tongueless Sparrow *			

The Village of Tall Tales

The Witch and the Young Priest

Urashimataro *

A Sparrow with Her Tongue Cut Out *	Long Ago	English and	Valentine, C.
A Straw Millionaire	Stories of	Japanese	(2011). <i>Long ago</i>
Grandfather Flowers	Japan	(side-by-side)	<i>stories of Japan</i>
Issun Boshi	(Bilingual		[Bilingual ed.].
Kachi Kachi Mountain *	Edition)	Suggested for	IBC Publishing.
Momotaro		intermediate	
Monkey vs. Crab *		English learners	

The Bamboo Princess

The Crane Gives Back

The Golden Boy

The Mouse's Wedding

The Old Man with the Lump

Urashima Taro *

Baby Grandma	Once Upon a	English	Kawauchi, S.
Bamboo Hats for Jizo	Time in		(Ed.) &
Bunbuku Teakettle *	Japan (Vol.	(with English to	McCarthy, R. F.
Click-Clack Mountain *	1-3)	Japanese	(Trans.). (1985).
Earless Ho-inchi		dictionary)	<i>Once upon a time</i>
Gonbei the Duck Hunter			(Vol. 1).
Grandfather Cherry Blossom		Suggested for	Kodansha
Hachisuke and the White Fox		beginning-	English Library.
How the Old Man Lost His Wen		intermediate	
Issun Boshi, the Inch-High Samurai		English learners	

Kintaro

Momotaro, The Peach Boy

Old Folks Mountain

Princess Flowerpot

Sleepyhead Taro

Tanabata

Tengu's Vanishing Cloak

The Bamboo Cutter's Tale

The Gratitude of the Crane

The Magic Bandanna

The Monkey and the Crabs *

The One Straw Millionaire

The Snow Woman

The Sparrow's Tongue *

The Tanuki Band of Shoji

The Tengu Who Loved Sake

Urashimataro*

Why the Jellyfish Has no Bones

Note. Suggested English level is based on informal observations from the teacher.

* Folktales used in the course

Incorporating Reader's Theater in Japanese University EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

Reader's Theater is an activity that is often utilized in classrooms for younger learners. However, this activity, which fosters a cooperative learning environment, can also be used to increase the fluency of Japanese university EFL learners. This article explains how the author uses Reader's Theater (hereafter called RT) with adult learners and how it can be scaffolded in a Japanese university setting through the introduction of information on the Japanese voice acting industry. Moreover, the benefits of implementing RT in the EFL classroom, potential challenges when doing so, and different ways of addressing these challenges are also discussed. The article focuses on the use of cooperative learning strategies, such as the jigsaw technique, which can be used to enhance student voice acting skills, delivery, pronunciation, and teamwork. Utilizing strategies like these can help ensure that RT will be an engaging activity for students in an English-medium classroom.

Introduction

Despite studying vocabulary and grammar for university entrance exams, Japanese university students are still challenged when it comes to using appropriate vocabulary words and grammatical structure, which affects their overall fluency (Iwamoto, 2016). In order to address the challenge of improving fluency, Reader's Theater (RT) is a useful classroom activity. RT is a form of "performance reading" in which the reader must attempt to take on the voice of the character, as well as the character's attitude and personality (Keen, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008; Worthy, Broaddus, & Ivey, 2001). RT involves repeated reading that can increase fluency and impact vocabulary growth due multiple exposures to new words (Keen, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). Furthermore, RT is defined as a "method of using drama techniques that have transcended the theater and moved into the reading classroom" (Thienkalaya & Chusanachoti, 2020, p. 307). Given these definitions, readers in an RT

activity are expected to read passages fluently and expressively to the audience (Stokes & Young, 2018). Liu (2000) explains that through RT, “meanings of a given text are constructed and/or reconstructed through dramatic exploration, which invites creativity and imagination, and conforms to no one style” (p. 354). Thus, RT enables students to unleash their creativity through their own interpretation of the text, while developing their fluency through rereading the scripts. In addition, improving social skills such as cooperation and teamwork is evident among peers in RT, as RT also allows students to work in groups, which can be considered cooperative learning (Karabag, 2015). Japanese university students, in this case, can benefit and improve their use of English as a foreign language through an RT performance. Specifically, the improvement of fluency and vocabulary knowledge will be done through a performative activity such as RT, rather than limiting the students’ output to written exams (Iwamoto, 2016; Keen, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). In this next part, I would like to discuss how RT can be incorporated into Japanese university EFL classrooms using cooperative learning and explain how I have been doing so in my English classes through the use of Japanese voice acting culture. In order to motivate the students, the idea of gamification of RT where students vote for the best performers will be also discussed.

Background

Reader's Theater: Definition, Benefits, and Challenges

Unlike traditional plays on stage, the performers of RT perform on stage without memorizing the script (Moran, 2006). In other words, the script will be held by the performers and their actions in the script will be implied rather than physically executed. Jordan and Harrell (2000) suggest that “involving students with enjoyable and exciting active reading procedures provide the key to fluency and higher levels of comprehension gain, through a natural process of repeated readings and interactive transactions with language” (p.74). With this in mind, RT is an effective drama technique that enhances student reading skills and fluency as it provides an opportunity for students to practice speech authentically and facilitate comprehension for readers. It has also been shown that struggling readers may increase their reading comprehension and reading fluency through RT (Mraz, Nichols, Caldwell, Beisley, Sargent, & Rupley, 2013). Although RT was originally used with younger learners, it can also be done with adult learners. In a study by Tanner and Chugg (2018), adults ranging in age from 18 to 36 were given four RT activities over a span of 14 weeks. Positive results were shown for fluency, accuracy and self-confidence in speaking English. The results of this study show that RT can be utilized with a wide range of age groups.

Another benefit that can be gained through RT is increased motivation. In a study that focused on RT for Japanese EFL learners, Ng and Boucher-Yip (2013) highlight the presence of higher motivation among students because of the expectation to perform with their group in a limited amount of time, as well as to perform realistically for the sake of an audience. In addition, this sense of immediacy is said to be important among Japanese EFL learners, especially with their homogeneous language environment outside the classroom (Ng & Boucher-Yip, 2013). If student and teacher expectations are clear, students will better understand the goal of the activity and be motivated by these expectations to perform through RT.

Inevitably, anxiety may be prevalent in EFL students taking part in a RT activity. Ohata (2005) states that there are three types of anxiety that can be present in the EFL classroom setting: state anxiety, trait anxiety, and language anxiety. State anxiety occurs when an EFL learner faces a certain situation or condition. In this case, the RT may become a situation where anxiety from students may manifest. The realization by students that they have to present in front of others creates anxiety. Trait anxiety, on the other hand, is believed to be a part of the person to begin with, wherein learners tend to be anxious by any situation that they are faced with (Worde, 1998). Finally, language anxiety is the “feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p. 284). In this case, students may face any or all of these kinds of anxiety due to the unfamiliarity of the RT activity and how it may affect their confidence when reading a script with unfamiliar words or contexts.

Although voice acting in accordance with a character is not necessary for a narrator, it may be challenging for the students to find the proper intonation unless they fully comprehend the lines in the script (voice acting will be described in a following section). This is also the case in other characters. In order to produce proper intonation, students are expected to acquire full comprehension of the script, including the vocabulary and phrases that were used (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). Since the vocabulary knowledge of students in each class may vary, there is a possibility that low-level students may be challenged in comprehending the script. Hence, may produce an awkward intonation that may not fit the situation in the story.

Aside from the challenges facing students, teachers also face multiple challenges in the use of RT in the classroom. One challenge for teachers is finding an appropriate script for the RT activity. Although resources can be found online, some may have grammatical errors and misspellings which should be checked before distributing to students. It may also be

time-consuming work for teachers to find an appropriate script for the level of their students. Related to this, the number of lines of each character in a script may be unbalanced. For example, in the script of "Hansel and Gretel" (Appendix A), the father has the fewest lines among all the characters, which may create a challenge for the teacher to properly assess the student playing that particular role compared to the other roles.

Cooperative Learning: Definition, Benefits, and Challenges

The term cooperative learning has been widely used in language teaching. Cooperative learning centers on working in teams in order to meet certain criteria, while students are individually held accountable for the content of the activity (Felder & Brent, 2007). Thus, cooperative learning enables students to work in groups with a shared goal (Kato, Bolstad, & Watari, 2015). In addition, during cooperative learning, the teacher and students jointly construct the knowledge in the classroom. According to Maftoon and Ziafar (2013), cooperative learning in the Japanese university EFL context was perceived to be a challenge due to the traditional classroom dynamic wherein the teacher simply transfers knowledge to students. However, it has been suggested that the inclusion of cooperative learning in Japanese university EFL context should be done in order to promote critical thinking and reasoning strategies (Maftoon & Ziafar, 2013).

Cooperative learning has been proven beneficial in EFL classrooms. Rushatz (1992) suggested that "Cooperative learning strategies strive to create group situations that will foster support and feedback systems while developing decision making, problem-solving and general social interaction skills" (p. 5). Since RT is an interactive activity that involves both students and teachers from practice to evaluation, it is important to take cooperation into account for RT to be more effective and successful. One of the most common cooperative learning techniques is the jigsaw technique. Jigsaw is defined as a technique where students are grouped into heterogenous teams and study a subtopic with members of other teams who have the same subtopic (Slavin, 1980). In other words, students are grouped according to their home group and their expert group. The home group is their original groups which have various subtopics to talk about, and the expert group is where the members from different groups gather to talk about the same subtopic. The reason why students are divided into their home groups and expert groups is to ensure that they learn not only within their own performance team, but that they also learn from other students who face similar challenges (Ishafit, Sulisworo, & Firdausy, 2016). In the case of RT, home groups are where students can discuss their scenes within their performance team, whereas expert groups are where

students with the same roles can generate ideas and opinions about the role that they are going to perform. This grouping enables familiarization, not only with the story, but also with the roles that the students are playing. Moreover, it enhances students' creativity and critical thinking skills as they discuss what kind of methods to use to become the character that they are playing in the RT. Using the jigsaw technique to prepare for the RT activity creates team-based learning. This type of cooperative learning may encourage discussion and clarification of ideas, as well enable students to become open to a diversity of ideas and perspectives through interaction with their peers (Cooper, Robinson, & McKinney, 1990; Gokhale, 1995).

Although anxiety has been highlighted as one of the potential challenges of RT, this can be addressed through cooperative tasks such as the jigsaw technique where students can meet in their home groups and expert groups. In this case, students are able to help and teach each other in order to ensure that they can reach their goals towards the RT activity.

Challenges, however, have been seen in cooperative learning groups. For example, there are students in the group who may not contribute to group discussions (Scherman & du Toit, 2008). In terms of EFL learning, different English levels between students may also cause unequal contribution when sharing ideas. In addition, switching groups from home groups and expert groups may also exhaust and cause demotivation to students who are preparing for RT due to the possible confusion with the instructions given.

Addressing the Potential Challenges Through Voice Acting in Japan

In Japan, one activity that can be considered to be similar to RT is voice acting. Voice acting has become a part of Japanese pop culture and it has a huge fan following. In Japan, *seiyuu*, or voice actors, can be distinguished from voice actors from other countries due to their celebrity status (Heinst, 2017). Voice acting in Japan is widespread since it is done not only in commercials and in public spaces, but also in *anime* series. This enables voice actors to produce musical work for anime theme songs as well (Nozawa, 2016). Yamasaki (2014) states one factor that contributes to making voice acting so recognizable is that voice actors may play more than two characters with completely different voices in an *anime* series. In addition, the normal speaking voices of these voice actors are different from any of the voices of the characters that they play. In addition to this, Yamasaki (2014) mentions that voice acting is more of a public figure type of occupation, with most voice actors and actresses having full-time careers in the industry, including singing as "idols" and catering to fans in "idol" style. This is why the voice acting industry in Japan is so well-known by the public.

Given the popularity of voice acting in Japan, it provides a good example when introducing RT to students.

In RT, students may change their voice according to the character which they play. This allows the students to become expressive through changing their voice in accordance to the interpretation of the character(s) which they are voicing (Keen, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). In my classes, I provide some facts and information about the voice acting industry in Japan and use it as an opportunity to introduce RT to my students. Next, I provide a brainstorming activity where I show two photos: (a) clipart of a voice actor and (b) clipart of a reader's theater performance (Appendix B). This is where I ask them to think of words which they can associate with these photos. After the warm-up activity, I say to them, "Let's be voice actors through Reader's Theater!" With these words, students are able to get a picture in their mind of how the RT activity will be performed in the classroom. After introducing RT through the analogy to voice acting, preparation for the rehearsals and cooperative group activities will be done in the classroom.

Given the idea of voice acting in Japan, the students are able to contribute ideas on how to use their voices depending on the character in their groups. The information about voice acting which is incorporated with RT lessens the anxiety of the students towards the unfamiliarity of RT. Specifically, students are able to imagine something familiar from their pop culture, and correlate this with the activity. In terms of the student assessments, voice acting becomes a part of the criteria wherein regardless of the length of the parts, students are expected to stay in character throughout the RT.

Reader's Theater Activity: Hansel and Gretel

Selection of Script

The teacher selecting the script should ensure that the level is appropriate to the students. Since I teach elementary level students with TOEIC scores ranging from 285 to 395, a script that is appropriate to their vocabulary level is chosen. In addition, a sense of familiarity to the story may help the students understand the character further. This is why one of the famous fairy tales, Hansel and Gretel, was chosen for the students. The number of students was also taken into account. In this case, there are 20 students in class who were divided into four groups with five members each. In this script of Hansel and Gretel, there are five characters.

Through cooperative learning, an analysis of the script may also be helpful to address the issue of script appropriateness. Aside from the screening that teachers can do of scripts,

an activity where students circle new vocabulary words may enhance critical thinking skills and vocabulary development. For critical thinking, students can find a mistake and think of ways to correct the script. For vocabulary development, students may circle the new words and put them on their vocabulary list. In addition, asking the teacher questions about the script can also create an interactive classroom when it comes to analyzing the script. This is also a good scaffolding method to prepare students for the work they will need to do in their home groups and their expert groups. In order to face the challenges that may exist in RT, it is very important to have good communication between students, as well as between students and the teacher.

Home Groups and Expert Groups

I would like to give an example of how I implemented the jigsaw technique in the classroom using the fairy tale, "Hansel and Gretel" (Appendix A). Students discussed their performance in home and expert groups. In this case, there were four groups in a classroom of 20 students. If there were less than 20 students in the class or a sudden absence from any of the students, some students would have had to perform two roles, such as the narrator and father.

Table 1

Home and Expert Groups in Reader's Theater for Hansel and Gretel

	Home Group 1	Home Group 2	Home Group 3	Home Group 4
Expert Group 1	Hansel	Hansel	Hansel	Hansel
Expert Group 2	Gretel	Gretel	Gretel	Gretel
Expert Group 3	Witch	Witch	Witch	Witch
Expert Group 4	Narrator	Narrator	Narrator	Narrator
Expert Group 5	Father	Father	Father	Father

During preparation time, I give time for the home groups to meet and discuss their chosen roles and their lines for the RT. After this, students within the expert groups share their ideas on how they will be able to play their roles fully. If there are any questions or if

clarification is needed about a specific role, the members of the expert group should advise each other on how the role should be played.

Assessment of Reader's Theater Presentations

In the Japanese EFL context, I have chosen four criteria to assess Japanese university students in the RT activity: voice acting, delivery, pronunciation, and teamwork. Through a rubric (Table 2), I am able to assess the students equally regardless of the length of their parts in the RT.

The first criterion to take into account is the voice acting of the students. Since information about the voice acting industry is used as part of the introduction to RT for Japanese EFL students, the way the students change their voice depending on the characters they play will be evaluated. This allows students to dramatize using their voices. The presence of voice dramatization in the RT allows students to gain confidence in using the language in proper context (Hillyard, 2016). Incorporating dramatization into RT may enable the integration of language dramatically while creating a fun and meaningful language learning classroom (Sirisrimangkorn, 2018). In RT, it is more challenging for students to alter their voice if they must perform two or more roles. It is a test of their creativity, while at the same time, also helping them to improve their speaking skills.

The second criterion to be considered is the delivery of the students. Delivery is divided into two sub-criteria: intonation and voice clarity. Intonation is the rising and falling inflection of the voice and students must change their voice and voice act depending on the character that is being played. Depending on the emotion of the character, the voice intonation can be changed. It is also important for evaluation to assess if the students are speaking and acting in a way that fits within the context of the story. Similar to drama where oral skills are developed through the practice of intonation and pronunciation (Ashton-Hay, 2005), RT can also be used as a way to challenge students to use proper intonation following the context of the story and the emotion of the character. Voice clarity, on the other hand, focuses on how the actor's lines are being understood by the audience. Specifically, the volume of the voice is also assessed. Students need to focus on how the lines that they are reading are conveyed and if they are being well-understood by those who are listening. This is done by ensuring that their voices are heard within classroom.

The third assessed criterion focuses on the pronunciation of the students. In a study on RT by Ruengwathakee (2021), pronunciation improved even though the RT activity was not originally designed specifically for pronunciation. Moreover, the study showed that the

participants' pronunciation skills had improved through RT. Given the benefits of RT for pronunciation, students are also assessed if they were able to pronounce the words correctly in the script. They must show the results of their practice before the actual presentation.

Finally, the teamwork in the group will be taken into consideration. RT, being a group activity, provides an opportunity for students to work in groups. It is important to take a look at how students communicate with each other during the actual presentation. During rehearsals students are encouraged to practice and use English with their fellow students. Furthermore, RT allows students to practice with an intensity that is not usually present during the regular lessons (Matheny, 2003). Given this, the preparation which the students have done will be assessed based on how smoothly they communicate with their group members during the presentation.

Given the four criteria for assessment, the table below shows the rubric that I used to assess my students with a TOEIC score of 285-395. I assess them according to the following criteria: voice acting, delivery, pronunciation, and teamwork. In this sample rubric, the highest score is A while the lowest is N.

Table 2

Sample Rubric for Reader's Theater

	N	C	B	A
Voice Acting	The student did not change his/her voice at all.	The student was able to partially change his/her voice, but only in few scenes.	The student was able to change his/her voice in volume and character, but there was a lack of clarity in some scenes.	The student was able to change his/her voice in volume and character according to the story and context.
Delivery	The student was monotonous and the lines were not delivered clearly	4-5 words were unclear, and intonation was not consistent.	2-3 words were unclear, but was able to maintain intonation.	The student was able to deliver his/her lines clearly with proper intonation

Pronunciation	The student had 5 or more mis-pronunciations	The student had 4 or 5 mis-pronunciations	The student had 2-3 mis-pronunciations	The student had 0-1 mis-pronunciations.
Teamwork	The student had to pause and ask questions to his/her classmates out loud in Japanese. The student was given explicit signals by his/her classmates.	The student had to pause and was given a signal multiple times. However, the student did not speak Japanese outside the script.	The student only had to pause once and waited for a signal from a classmate.	The student had a smooth transition without having to wait for the next person to speak, nor for an <i>obvious</i> signal from a classmate.

Gamification

Another factor to consider when addressing the challenges of RT in the classroom is the use of gamification elements. Gamification is “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011, p. 1). In the case of activities that require performance such as RT, I create poll-based gamification elements wherein the students may choose who are the best actors, narrators and groups. This will be done after all groups have performed and students will be given a QR Code to cast their votes on the same day. After that, an awards ceremony for the best actors, narrator and group will be held on a different day. I believe that this helps motivate students to perform the RT, while also ensuring that it is a fun and interactive activity for everyone involved.

Reflection: Successes and Failures

Through RT, I was able to observe various students and how they performed through RT. One of the successful moments involved the use of voice according to the character. Most of the students were able to visualize the character and use their voice according to the character’s emotion, and the setting. By introducing RT through the voice acting industry in Japan, students react with “Oh, I get it.” Then, they are able to use their voice during practice. Moreover, the students are able to adapt to a possible issue. For example, the absence of a

group member can affect the performance. Yet, there were students who were willing to play two roles right before the presentation. The unforeseen circumstances did not affect the students in a negative manner. Instead, some showed willingness to volunteer to voice a character on the absentee's behalf.

In spite of these successes, challenges can be inevitable. For example, there are students who may lack motivation to participate in RT even though teamwork was being partially scored. In addition, students may still mispronounce words due to the practice time being limited to 10-15 minutes for two meetings before the presentation. In order to improve this, doing a script review or analysis with the students prior to the practice may be helpful for them not only to familiarize themselves with the pronunciation, but also with any unfamiliar words.

Conclusion

RT may be challenging for students if it is not properly scaffolded in the classroom. The reason I use the Japanese voice acting industry as an example is because of its prominence in Japanese pop culture. By saying, "Let's be voice actors through RT!" and beginning a warm-up comparing voice acting and RT, students are able to picture in their mind what to do in the activity. In addition, it is important to create a cooperative learning environment, especially for students who might feel anxious and overwhelmed by the RT activity. By using the jigsaw technique, students are able to speak to their peers and know their perspectives about the characters that they are playing. More importantly, it ensures that the students cooperate as a group in this activity. Through RT, students can enhance their creativity and critical thinking skills, and at the same time, improve their voice clarity and delivery in a way that will help prepare them for real-life English communication.

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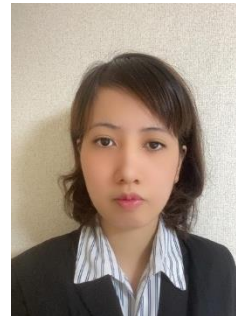
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Appendix A

Hansel and Gretel

Source:

<https://wcdpl.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Hansel%20and%20Gretel%20Readers%20Theatre.pdf>

Reader Roles: (1) Narrator, (2) Father, (3) Hansel, (4) Gretel, and the (5) Witch

Scene 1 (at home)

Narrator: Hansel and Gretel live near a dark forest with their father.

Father: Good morning, children. Did you sleep well?

Hansel: Yes, I slept very well.

Gretel: Me too, Father.

Father: Excellent. What are you going to do today?

Hansel: We are going to go play in the forest!

Father: Okay, we'll be careful. You may get lost if you go too deeply into the woods. Don't talk to strangers!

Hansel: Don't worry, Father.

Gretel: We'll be careful!

Scene 2 (in the forest)

Narrator: One day, they get lost deep among the trees. They try to mark their path through the woods with breadcrumbs, but the birds eat their trail.

Gretel: Hansel, where are we? It's getting late.

Hansel: I don't know, Gretel.

Gretel: I'm very hungry, I wish we hadn't used our bread to make a trail.

Hansel: Father will come and find us.

Narrator: Then, Hansel and Gretel see a pretty cottage in a clearing.

Hansel: Let's go and ask for some food!

Gretel: That is a great idea, Hansel.

Narrator: As Hansel and Gretel get closer to the house, they realize it was a very special house.

Hansel: Look! It's made of sweets.

Gretel: And gingerbread!

Hansel: Let's try some.

Gretel: It's delicious!

Narrator: Hansel and Gretel nibble away like hungry mice. Suddenly, an old woman opened the door.

Witch: You are eating my pretty house! Are you hungry?

Hansel and Gretel: (jumping in shock and dropping their food) We're so sorry.

Hansel: We didn't mean to eat your house...

Gretel: ...but we are so hungry.

Witch: (smiling sweetly) Come inside, dear children! You poor things, let me give you some proper food!

Narrator: Hansel and Gretel step inside the house. Then the old woman locks the door!

Witch: How dare you eat my cottage! I will fatten you up and eat you, boy! And you, lazy girl, can get to work doing chores for me!

Hansel and Gretel: No, we didn't mean to. We're sorry.

Narrator: The witch locks Hansel in a cage. She was a very wicked witch!

Witch: Little girl, get me some gingerbread and sweets for your brother to eat. He will get nice and round if I feed him sweets every day, and then he will be very tasty.

Gretel: No, I won't.

Witch: Then, I will eat you both now!

Hansel: Please Gretel, do as she says.

Narrator: Each day, the witch fed Hansel lots of sweets and gingerbread. And each day, she felt Hansel's finger to see if he was fat enough to eat. Hansel knew the witch couldn't see well so each time instead of poking his finger out of the cage for the witch to feel, he stuck out a skinny stick he had found.

Witch: Show me your finger, boy!

Hansel: (holding out the stick) Here it is.

Witch: (feeling the stick, and grumbling) Still too thin!

Narrator: Soon the witch grew tired of waiting.

Witch: I can't wait any longer! I shall eat you both!

Hansel and Gretel: Oh no!

Witch: Little girl, add wood to the fire in the oven so that it is nice and hot!

Narrator: Gretel had an idea to trick the witch!

Gretel: (craftily) I don't know how to! Show me how, and then I'll do it.

Witch: Silly girl! Like this!

Narrator: As the witch bent towards the oven with the wood, clever Gretel pushes her inside the oven and slammed the door.

Witch: (screaming) It's too hot! Let me out, little girl. LET ME OUT!!

Hansel: You are so clever and brave, Gretel! Thank you for saving us! I'm so happy to be outside of that cage!

Narrator: Hansel and Gretel soon find their way out of the dark forest, and back to their home, where their father was anxiously looking for them.

Hansel and Gretel: (shouting with joy and running towards the house) Father! Father! We are home.

Father: Hansel! Gretel!

Where have you been? I have been so worried about you!

Hansel: We got lost in the woods and the wicked witch tried to eat us.

Father: Oh my! I missed you very much! No more going into the woods by yourselves!

Narrator: And they all lived happily ever after!

Appendix B
Clipart for Warm-up



Videoconferencing Imitating Television in Foreign Language Instruction

Timothy Cook

Iryo Sosei University

Abstract

This is a report on a videoconference conducted by a Japanese university seminar, the topic of which is language learning with online language exchange partners. The Japanese students are studying English and their partners are English speakers studying Japanese at American universities. While the technology used in the videoconference was limited to on-hand hardware and free software, it was staged as an interactive television show informed by the author's past experience in distance learning programming. The reactions to the videoconference, from seminar and remote students, are discussed and suggestions for further exploration are offered.

これは、日本の大学のゼミで行われた「オンラインによる言語交換パートナーとの言語学習」をテーマにしたビデオ会議のレポートである。日本の大学生は英語を学んでおり、言語交換相手はアメリカの大学で日本語を学ぶ大学生たちだ。ビデオ会議に使用された技術は、手持ちのハードウェアと無料のソフトというごく限られたものだったが、筆者が過去に経験した遠隔教育番組の経験を生かし、インタラクティブなテレビ番組のように演出がされている。日本のゼミ生や相手側の学生によるビデオ会議への反応を考察し、さらなる調査のための提案が薦められる。

Introduction

This report is of a videoconference conducted by a Japanese university junior-senior seminar I teach concentrating on language learning through language exchange (also known as “tandem language exchange” and “telecollaboration”) with remote partners online. Unlike typical instructional videoconferencing, which serves to recreate the teacher-student dynamic of the classroom, the design of this videoconference was as an interactive television show with the

narrative elements of a variety show, a sit-com, and a call-in talk show. It required those on camera to take on a theatrical role while they teach Japanese.

In the 1990s, I developed this same design for teaching Japanese in a high school program for American public television entities. Beginning in the 1980s, such distance learning courses emerged via various transmission systems such as satellite and microwave frequencies. Writing in 2010, Carey and Elton recount that these “very simple interactive television services...reached thousands of primary, secondary, and university students, typically providing courses that would not otherwise have been available in rural areas or small school districts (e.g., advanced mathematics or foreign languages such as Russian or Japanese)” (p. 261). My particular television course enrolled over 1,000 high school students. Voice interaction with me, the TV instructor, was so infrequent for any one student as to have minimal impact on his or her Japanese fluency. Instead, I used student interaction as a kind of fishbowl for all the other students not interacting that day to learn through observation. Each lesson was embedded with humorous stories, to which the resolution required student interaction in the language being taught. Although contemporaneous studies did not focus on the theatricality I and my producer/director endeavored to incorporate into the course, they tended to view the instruction overall in a favorable light (peer-reviewed studies limited to Bruning et al., 1993, and Yi & Majima, 1993) and the course proved the most popular of all the courses that the interstate service offered.¹

Digital video technology has made video production “accessible and affordable” and it “simplifies the production process” (Masats et al., 2009, p. 344). That which used to be limited to TV stations can now be accomplished with one’s laptop and smartphone, even if production quality is not up to broadcast standards. I wanted to see if such a design could in any way be reproduced today without the professional broadcast apparatus or acting talent and coaching to which I once had access.

¹ The course, produced by Nebraska Educational Telecommunications and the Nebraska Department of Education, was offered through the Satellite Educational Resources Consortium (SERC), a compact of 18 American states and their public broadcasting entities and departments of education, sharing each other’s distance learning courses from the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s. Important for language learning purposes, a significant component of the design of the Japanese course was a bank of Japanese teaching assistants who spoke by telephone audiobridge with all students in groups of 10 for 20 minutes of class time twice a week.

My original rationale for retaining common signifiers of broadcast entertainment in my television teaching was to acknowledge students' presumed expectations when they watch TV. People watch television not because they *have to*, but because they *want to*, and to the degree that was possible, I wanted to make students watch my instruction because they wanted to. My assumption was that if I could be successful in that pursuit, students would learn Japanese better. As the uses of video technology have broadened far beyond broadcast television since the 1990s, viewers of any video format have less fixed expectations of what they will see. Students participating in a class on a videoconferencing platform today would not expect it to be a TV show. However, I was curious what participants' reactions would be if it did feel like a familiar genre of entertainment television. At the end of the of the videoconference, after the "show" was finished and the seminar students were no longer in character, I asked remote students for their informal reactions in a group discussion. The following week, I had the seminar students talk about the experience in a class discussion.

The Design

Seminar Design

The seminar consists of five students of English, for whom I have facilitated communication with overseas partners. Some of the communication has been one-on-one and some class-to-class. Locating partners through various language exchange websites, online teacher discussion groups, and my personal contacts with instructors of Japanese abroad, we have experimented with various platforms for both synchronous and asynchronous exchanges. As is the practice in language exchanges, approximately half the time students speak in their native language and the other half in the language of their partners, usually at designated times.

The focus of the seminar has been on language exchange, not videoconferencing per se. While the students who joined the seminar were open to acting on camera, it was neither part of their experience nor their main motivation to enroll. Moreover, the seminar videoconferences lack any of the trappings of professional broadcast television. At best, I could only approximate such trappings with the limited video tools, production skills, and acting talent at my disposal.

Videoconference Design

This videoconference connected my five seminar students with 12 students of Japanese in three universities in the United States. Because of both the time difference between Japan and the U.S., and the U.S. COVID-19 situation, students in the U.S. joined the videoconference from their respective homes. Live video and audio from all the participants were transmitted to each other via Zoom; however, the seminar students on the Japan side were focused on directly addressing the camera, or each other at the appropriate points, and did not look at the Zoom video.

In previous assignments, I had students try their hand at scriptwriting, but despite supplying them with interactive narrative examples and efforts to steer them away from composing pedantic lectures, my expectations turned out to be unrealistic. Students came up with scripts appropriate for an instructional setting, all with interesting information, but the scripts were mostly that: informative. For example, in a previous videoconference, after explaining what measures the Japanese students had taken for COVID-19, one student asked what measures American students had taken. The scripts had little sense of theatricality which I had attempted to foster. For the videoconference that is the focus of this paper, I wrote the basic script myself while incorporating students' ideas and suggestions. A representative section of the script is in Table 1. The script was printed in big letters on several sheets of paper, taped together, and scrolled by an off-camera student standing close to the cameras so that on-camera students could read it while appearing to look directly at the camera.

Table 1

A Segment of the Videoconference Script

Camera	Dialogue
CAM 2: Student A	A: (sighs in frustration) Teacher, can I go to the bathroom?
CAM 1: Teacher	T: The bathroom? ___S___, this is a Japanese class now. Can he go to the bathroom? Is that OK?

I

T: (react) Yes, (reluctantly) B, it's OK.

You can go to the bathroom.

CAM 2: Student B prances out of room A: Thank you.

T: But come back soon, OK?

A: Okaaay. (prances out of room)

Note. This is an English translation of the script, which was in Japanese. In previous lines, Student A asks twice if he can go to the bathroom, but the person playing the teacher role gets distracted talking to online students and fails to answer Student A's request. In the lines under CAM 1: Teacher, S refers to a remote student whom the teacher calls. The 'I' in the middle of the script stands for interaction.

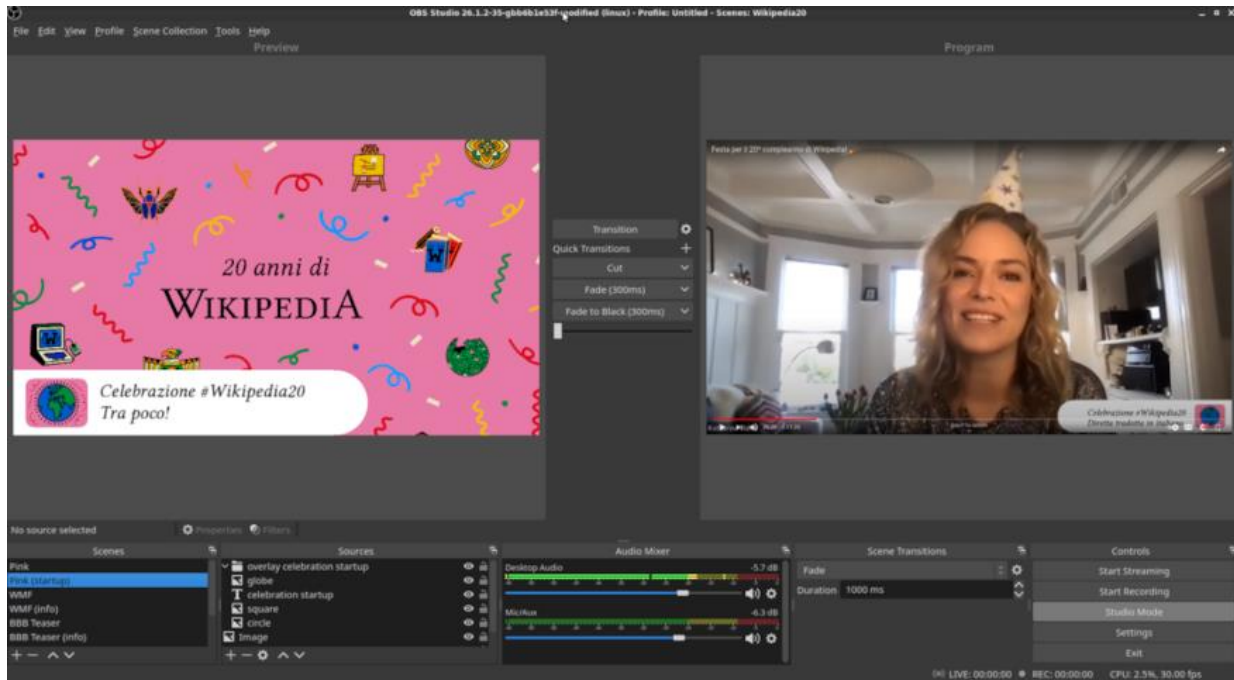
As the script segment shows, the seminar students' speaking is scripted out in advance; however, the online students' speaking, indicated by the capital "I," is not scripted. Their reactions are genuine as they grapple with the appropriate Japanese to meet the situation. At several points, the remote students either did not know how to respond or the seminar students were not able to make out what a remote student said. I, who was off camera, occasionally gestured responses for the on-camera students to make.

The videoconference was conducted entirely with on-hand equipment and free downloadable software. A laptop computer received video and audio wirelessly from the cameras and microphones built into smartphones through an app called Irium Webcam. On the laptop, OBS Studio, an open-source program for live and recorded video production, was used for switching between cameras and adding preproduced elements for the Zoom feed. OBS Studio was also used to mix the audio of the seminar students and the remote participants, and finally to record the entire

production.² The OBS Studio user interface is shown in Figure 1. The image on the right is what is sent out to the program, in this case Zoom. The image on the left is the next scene cued up to be shown after the user transitions to it.

Figure 1

Screenshot of OBS Studio Software with a Graphic and Katherine Maher During Wikipedia 20



Note. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Open_Broadcaster_Software_serving_the_live_translation_in_Italian_of_the_Wikipedia_20th_Birthday_Global_Celebration.png; Valerio Bozzolan, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

While the dramatic pretense of the videoconference was that it was a TV show, it included specific Japanese instructional content from the elementary Japanese textbook *Genki: An Integrated Course in Elementary Japanese I*, Unit 6 (Banno et al., 2020). The new grammar involved the *-te* form of Japanese verbs and three of its uses, one for making polite requests (*-te*

² The recording was subsequently edited to remove overly long silent gaps and unintentional gaffs. It can be viewed at the following URL: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GntL3410_7V-No0ct34Hs1YVuM5SNYVV/view?usp=sharing

kudasai), one for expressing permission to do something (*-te mo ii*), and lastly one for denying permission (*-te wa ikemasen*).

Interactive Theater at a Distance

Before the Japanese lesson begins, seminar students and I casually greet and talk to online students in English and Japanese as they enter the Zoom session. No one is yet “in character.” After all the online students have entered, the show begins with conventional signifiers of television, first, with a fade to black, then fade to an opening credit consisting of a logo in Japanese script over a still shot of the university, accompanied by catchy music (see Figure 2). Except for perhaps the word for “university,” the name of the university in *kanji* (Chinese characters used to write Japanese) would most likely be beyond the reading ability of the students of Japanese. In any case, black screen, fade to credit, and music only serve the purpose of signifying that the viewer is watching Japanese TV, as opposed to a videoconference for learning Japanese.

Figure 2

Opening and Closing Credit With Still Shot and University Name and Logo



The show is staged in a university classroom, not because this is a class, even though it is, but because this is a show *about* a class. This distinction allows for events to occur that assist the narrative structure of the show but would constitute gaffs in an actual class. The gaffs themselves have been scripted, choreographed, and rehearsed, although actual gaffs occur as well, for example, when actors forget the choreography, or I, controlling the computer, momentarily show the wrong media element.

After the opening credit, everyone appearing on camera assumes a particular role. There are three characters: one who plays a teacher and two who play students. The first character to appear is a teacher standing behind a teaching station at the front of a classroom (see Figure 3). As he introduces himself, a superimposed lower third title graphic shows his name in Japanese, again in characters that viewers probably cannot read in the amount of screen time given. In any case, the viewers will have already known him from past interactions, the most recent one being just a few minutes prior to the black screen and credit announcing the theatrical space. The superimposed title graphic, a conventional television practice for anyone in the host position, serves to identify the character as a character.

Figure 3

The “Teacher”



The next person to appear, seen in Figure 4, is a student who just stands at the entrance as if he is unsure if he can enter. The teacher waves him to come in, but the student still is unsure, as if he wants to explicitly hear it stated, “Come in.” The teacher had just shown a graphic with the Japanese word for “classroom” and had an online student read it, then showed still images of various kinds of classrooms while repeating this word. Ostensibly, the teacher went through this to tell online students where he was—in a classroom—but the real reason was so he could use this later to tell the student at the entrance to enter the classroom. The teacher had also taught the word for “enter” in the same way, with video clips of people entering various rooms, buildings, and a bathtub. When the student appears at the classroom entrance, the teacher turns to the camera and shows how to make a polite request out of this verb, after which an online student says to the student at the entrance, “Please enter the classroom” in Japanese. Only then does the student finally enter.

Figure 4

Student Standing at the Entrance to the Classroom



After the student enters, he goes to a chair, but for some reason he just stands by it. Similar to the setup of a joke, the whole routine with “enter” is repeated for the word for “sit,” after which the student sits down, presumably to start taking the class.

Next, another student appears at the entrance and the “enter” and “sit” routines are repeated. Then the first student, pointing to the hallway outside, asks if he can go to the bathroom and the pattern is repeated with “go.” The first student then gets up and walks out.

The teacher continues to be interrupted with requests when the second classroom student in Figure 5 holds his box lunch as if to ask if he can eat it. Again, the teacher turns to an online student first to elicit the Japanese for “May I eat my box lunch?” (Figure 6), only after which the second student asks properly. Instead of immediately answering the request, the teacher asks the online student what he thinks, if it is permissible to eat lunch during class in an American school. The online student says “no,” then the teacher tells the classroom student “no.”

Figure 5

Student Asks for Permission to Eat Box Lunch



Figure 6

Using Graphics to Elicit “May I Eat My Box Lunch?”



At relevant spots all through the conversation, video clips are dropped in of a student in a library who is violating all the rules by eating potato chips, drinking juice, listening to music, and singing to the music. Other students try to tell him that those actions are not allowed, but he pays no attention until a librarian approaches him on each infraction and asks the student if he thinks it is allowed. Each time, the student is forced to admit that it is not allowed and hands over the offending item to the librarian, as in Figure 7. Each time, the librarian takes the item back to her desk.

Figure 7

Librarian Reprimands Student for Drinking Juice in the Library



After the teacher has finished asking online students about what is and what is not permissible in the United States, the library sketch is shown in its entirety. The resolution of the sketch—the theatrical punchline—is when we see the librarian succumbing to temptation to indulge in the confiscated items. The camera then zooms out to show the librarian surrounded by the offending student and all the other students in the previous shots (Figure 8). They ask in chorus “Is it allowed to eat in the library?” “Is it allowed to drink in the library?” and so on. To each question, the librarian sheepishly says it is not allowed. The scene ends with the sad trombone “wah-wah-wah” sound understood in both American and Japanese culture as failure in a comedic context.

Figure 8

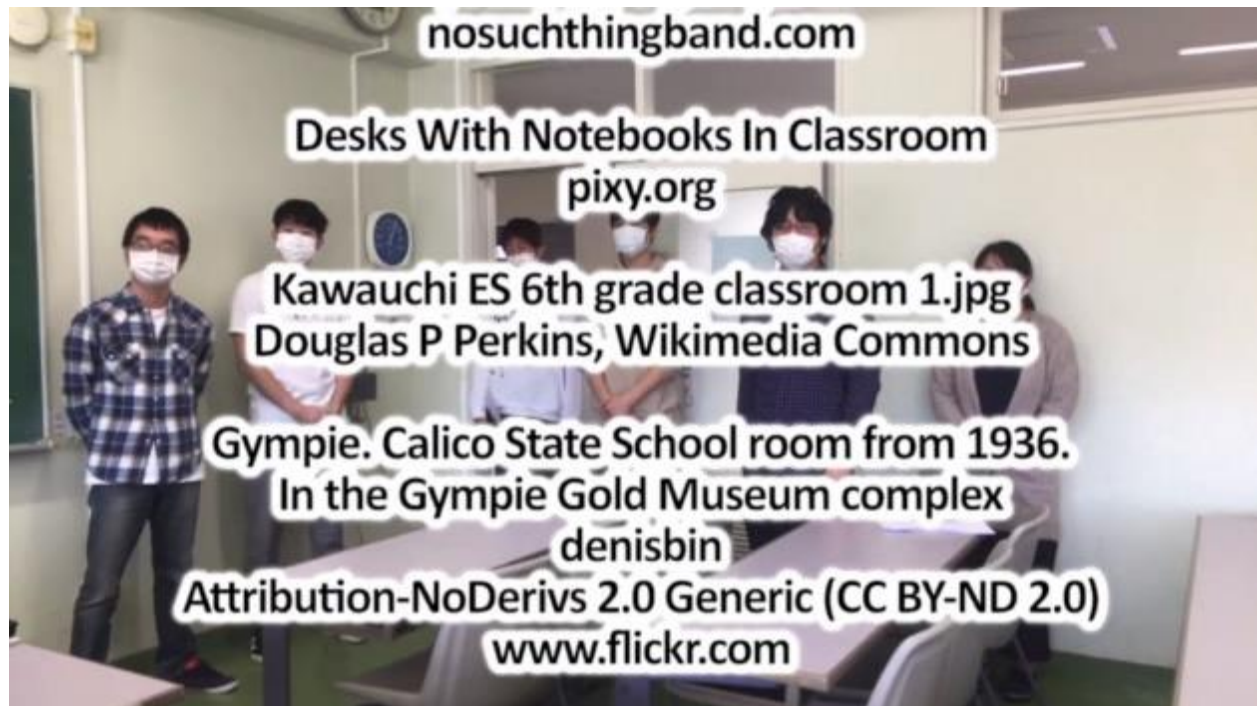
Librarian Caught Breaking the Rules



After the whole sketch is finished, we come back to the live classroom scene to find the student who went to the bathroom now talking to someone out in the hallway. The teacher goes to the classroom entrance and asks an online student if it is OK to talk to friends outside the classroom during class. The online student inevitably says “no” and tells that to the classroom student, who then agrees to come back in and sit down. After this entire series of passive-aggressive behaviors that teachers know well, everyone finally seems ready to start studying. The teacher says “OK, let’s study Japanese” but just then, the bell rings indicating that the class is finished. The students quickly ask if it is OK to go to the next class. The exasperated teacher tells the students to wait and to at least say “good-bye” to the online students. As they do, the theme music starts playing and closing credits roll by. All the students, both those who were on camera and behind the camera appear to say good-bye (Figure 9). The credits again roll by too fast to be read, even the ones in English, but again, it is only a pretense that credits are serving the purpose of informing the viewer of who is responsible for the TV production and what resources were used in it. What the credits really signify is that what we have just watched was TV.

Figure 9

Rolling Closing Credits Over Students



After the last credit, which was the first credit in Figure 2 at the beginning of the show, the video fades to black for a few seconds, then fades back to the classroom. The fade-to-black, like the closing curtain in theater, signifies the end of the show, a break between the world of make-believe and the real world, between the actors acting in character and acting as “themselves.” After that break, the conversation turns to English.

The Learning Experience for the Participants

During the closing credits, the online student participants were heard in the video voicing their pleasure at having participated. “It was really so amazing,” one student said. “They did so well, they did sooo well,” said another. “They were so fun, so sweet.” The online students came from a wide range of Japanese-language abilities. Some voiced their comments in Japanese. *Totemo tanoshikatta desu* (“That was so fun”), one said. *Wakari-yasui desu* (“It’s easy to understand”) was another comment. *Sanka sasete kurete arigatou gozaimashita* (“Thank you for letting me participate”), said one student in rather advanced Japanese. However, another student from another university said “That was tough.” The students’ Japanese instructors were also

online. One expressed her surprise at how novel the experience was. She also asked her students if they were nervous. Two students said they were indeed. It was as if they had experienced stage fright. As this was an interactive performance, they too were performers.

While the Japanese in the show was straight out of a Japanese textbook, the language was put into a unique context, that of an interactive show. One online student commented that, while she thought she was familiar with the language being taught and could produce it in the classroom, it seemed to “slip out the window” when she was called to use it in “real life.” Other students concurred. It is ironic that they would think of a highly scripted and staged show was “real life.” It could be understood that the event was not experienced as didactic, even if learning took place.

While this experience was novel for the seminar students, this being a live performance, their first reaction was to criticize themselves for their mistakes. They felt that despite having rehearsed the script several times, they had not rehearsed enough. The two most vocal of them expressed exhilaration at being part of such a performance, but the overall conclusion among the five students was that these types of performances require too much preparation. Later videoconferences were held in visually interesting locations, including a park, a reconstructed traditional Japanese farmhouse, and my own apartment. These were all rehearsed as well, but they were all in an explanatory mode; there was no storyline running through them.

A Model for Foreign Language Instruction?

For the seminar students, acting on camera was at once thrilling and scary; however, their final verdict, as well as the work involved to produce such a videoconference, would seem to point to the ultimate futility of the exercise. The show followed a script that spelled out each video clip, music clip, still image, graphic text, motion graphic, sound effect, or camera shot seen or heard at any given moment. Each element had to be created or found online with copyright clearance, then programmed into the video production software. Even after the best preparations, several technical problems and human errors arose. As the seminar instructor, I had intended to teach students how to use my laptop computer to edit video and arrange media elements into live video feeds, but that was precluded by the COVID-19 situation.

Despite the challenges and the conclusions of the seminar students, it is worth noting that the distance learning programs I had created in the past for public television entities spent millions of dollars to do basically the same thing, albeit at a more polished level. That money covered budgets for professional television equipment and armies of production and administrative staff. More recently, especially in the days of COVID-19, many teachers, whether by choice or requirement, have been teaching on videoconferencing or other teaching platforms that include an option for live video. Much attention has rightly been devoted to the design of such programs to ensure that students are engaged in learning activities, but little to no attention goes into the video itself. Typically, the most creative options for teachers are choosing an interesting still background for their talking head. For no extra cost in equipment, teachers can add a theatrical nod to what they do on videoconferencing platforms every day. With the addition of a modest technology budget, a teacher could employ much better video and audio quality. The cost would still be incomparably less than what educational institutions were willing to spend on past distance learning productions.

Given the demands to produce such a videoconference, teachers that lack acting and media production experience are unlikely to add a demanding video project to their busy schedules. However, for teachers that do have such experience, or are interested in gaining it, videoconferencing in imitation of and in homage to television is worth consideration. Instead of foreign language teachers adding this as a project, teachers in institutions housing theater and media studies could undertake this as the focus of a unit or semester in collaboration with foreign language teachers. Moreover, if a teacher were too time-strapped to create a rich media production, but had students with strong acting skills, those skills could compensate for less media. Rather than serve as a second-best tool after teaching in person, video can be its own best tool for a new kind of rewarding experience. Used in this way, a videoconference in a foreign language presents far more possibilities than language teaching and learning alone. In an ever more technologized society with all its present potential and pitfalls, it creates new ways to be human.

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Genki: A Case Study of Benefits for Foreigners Producing Theatre in a Japanese Regional Dialect

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Abstract

This paper describes the Genki Tosaben Musical (Genki), a unique community theatre project in Kochi prefecture in Japan. Since 1996, foreigners living in Kochi have been creating original musical theatre productions in *Tosaben*, the local Japanese dialect, and touring the prefecture to raise money for charity and promote cross-cultural exchange. In this study, qualitative survey responses from 35 former participants in Genki were analyzed. Based on these survey responses, this paper explores the motivations of the participants in this production, how the experience impacted language learning and community integration, as well as the positive and negative aspects of partaking in this event.

Introduction

When people imagine theatre in Japan they may picture the traditional arts such as Kabuki, Noh, or even Takarazuka. However, in Kochi prefecture there is a truly distinctive theatre experience, the Genki Tosaben Musical (Genki). An equivalent to this theatre event for English speakers would be if a group of non-native English-speaking international students in the Scottish Highlands, Newfoundland in Canada, or the Appalachians in the US decided to perform for the locals in their own dialects, which even compatriots may have difficulty in understanding or even disparage. To better understand placement of this unique Japanese-speaking theatre event within the context of place, this paper first describes the *Tosaben* dialect and the history and operation of Genki. This is followed by a brief overview of the benefits of theatre in terms of language learning and motivation. Finally, there is a discussion of the research results.

Tosaben Dialect

While standard Japanese (*hyojungo*), based on the Tokyo area dialect, is taught in schools nationally, Japan has many dialects (see Hattori, 2019 for an overview). These dialects formed in large part based on movement restrictions due to geographical factors such as mountains or seas separating areas, with some dialects being almost mutually incomprehensible (Lorant, 2014). Kochi Prefecture is home to two dialects, *Tosaben* and *Hataben*, with *Tosaben* being spoken in the provincial capital of Kochi City and the eastern regions of the prefecture, and *Hataben* in the western areas (Takahashi, 2010). *Tosaben* is related to *Kansaiben*, the regional dialect of Osaka and Kyoto; however, it differs due to the geographical isolation of Kochi, with the mountains on one side and the Pacific Ocean on the other (Yoshida, 2010). *Tosaben* features distinct grammar (Sato, 2010) and expressions (Yasutake & Yuen, 2010) which can deviate from both *Kansaiben* and standard Japanese, *hyojungo*. For example, saying “to know” and “do not know” in *hyojungo* is *shiteru* and *shiranai* respectively, whereas they are *shichu* and *shiran* in *Tosaben*. *Tosaben* is also one of the dialects that contains many archaic phonological and grammatical features that have not been used in standard Japanese following the Meiji Restoration in the 1800s (Lorant, 2014). This can make *Tosaben* challenging even for advanced speakers of Japanese to understand casual conversation among locals, especially older residents, as well as children who have yet to be taught *hyojungo* in school. There is also a great deal of pride in the local dialect which is often featured in tourism campaigns as well as local business names and products. This is reflective of the changing attitudes towards dialects following the end of the second world war, when *hyojungo* was less strictly forced on school children, leading to a greater interest in dialects after the 1970s (Okumura, 2016). With this in mind, understanding a local dialect can be a source of linguistic capital for Japanese L2 speakers as they interact with members of their local communities (Takeuchi, 2015). In addition, willingness to communicate (WTC) (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004) in *Tosaben* can be an effective way to connect with the local community. This is particularly relevant for foreigners in a largely rural prefecture such as Kochi, as we will see in the next section.

The Genki Tosaben Musical

To understand the creation and success of *Genki*, it is useful to look at some of the particular features of Kochi. Within the 47 prefectures of Japan, Kochi is one of the more rural, isolated, and monocultural. According to Statistics Japan, Kochi prefecture has the 4th lowest population density of the 47 prefectures, and has the 5th lowest ratio of foreigners to

Japanese residents at 0.65/100 residents compared to 2.16/100 nationally and 4.11/100 in Tokyo (2021b). Of the 4580 foreign residents registered in Kochi in 2018, people from English speaking countries are few, with 185 Americans and 51 British citizens registered (Statistics Japan, 2021a). This often results in Japan Exchange Teaching (JET) Programme participants, either as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and Coordinators of International Relations (CIRs), being the only visibly non-Japanese, English-speaking residents of various small towns. This has the potential to lead to feelings of isolation and stress for the JET participants and provides an impetus towards integration into both the local Japanese community as well as the community of foreigners as it is important for social well-being. This may be especially true for JETs who are living alone in a foreign country for the first time in their lives.

In part to help promote connections and cross-cultural understanding between JETs and the local community, the GENKI Youth Association (GENKI *Seinen-kai*) has been creating original musical theatre performances (the Genki Tosaben Musical, aka Genki) in *Tosaben* every year since 1996 until 2020, the first time that the performance was cancelled, which was due to COVID-19. The subsequent 2021 performance was moved online (GENKI Youth Association, 2021a; 2021b). Each play is written from zero each year and typically combines western plots with historical Kochi figures and local legends (see GENKI Youth Association, 2021b for past performance titles).

A typical timeline of the production involves a team of writers meeting in the fall to develop an overall theme, with each act of the play assigned to a different writer (in English or Japanese) which is then translated into *Tosaben* by local Japanese volunteers. In January/February, volunteer audition for roles. During the audition, actors are initially asked for their commitment limitations in order to decide the size of role, before performing a song of their choice, and a short reading. Actors may have multiple roles depending on the number of volunteers each year, and may also assist with prop design, choreography, or directing. Rehearsals take place in Kochi City on weekends throughout February and March, with performances taking place across the prefecture during the first two weekends in April. While on tour, traveling by bus or other forms of privately shared transportation, there are two to three performances per day, with the final and largest performance taking place in Kochi City. There is no admission charge for the performances, although afterwards the audience is asked to donate money towards scholarships for local students to study abroad.

The costs of the production (venue rental, costumes, and transportation) are predominantly bourn by the volunteers (often contributing over 10,000 yen per person),

although there is some outside support, such as storage space provided by the local government and free venue rental at some performance locations. The participants are usually JET Programme participants, however in the past international students and private dispatch company ALTs have also participated. In addition, there are usually some local Japanese volunteers (“*Tosaben Masters*”) who help with script checks, line coaching, and lighting or other activities while on tour.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have shown that theatre and drama can have beneficial foreign language learning effects (Carson, 2012; Dodson, 2002; Horghagen & Josephsson, 2010; Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo, 2004). These benefits can be seen in terms of the improvement of specific language skills as well as motivation (Barbee, 2016).

Theatre lends itself to Task-Based Learning as it engages learners’ interest, has a focus on meaning, is assessed on the outcome, requires completion, and is a ‘real-life’ activity (Carson, 2012). According to Raquel (2015), the nature of theatre immerses learners in a language with scripts using spoken grammar and involves an emphasis on speaking, requiring pronunciation, intonation, and expression practice. In addition, there is reading practice and vocabulary acquisition through line memorization. Finally, performing in a foreign language on a public stage may help to increase confidence in speaking off-stage (Dodson, 2002). There can also be an increase in knowledge of the target culture through idioms and immersion in authentic texts (RyanScheutz & Colangelo, 2004).

Theatre also involves multiple types of motivation for language learning. One common way of looking at motivation is the intrinsic (internal rewards such as the joy of doing an activity) and extrinsic (getting rewards such as grades or praise or avoiding punishments from outside sources) motivational dichotomy, with intrinsic motivation considered most powerful (Dornyei, 1994). In theatre there are many sources of extrinsic motivation such as having to meet a performance deadline and the expectations of the audience and fellow actors. However, there is clearly intrinsic motivation as well, with actors challenging themselves to take on new and bigger roles.

Although motivation for language learning is complex, one of the most important contexts is when learners live in the target language community, which can be defined as integrative motivation. This can be broadly defined as “a positive disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community” (Dornyei, 1994, p.274). Although most studies on the benefits of theatre have

dealt with students rather than adults in society, previous research with refugees in Norway found that theatre participation helped with both social connections among participants, as well as increased engagement with the local Norwegian community and motivation to learn Norwegian (Horghagen & Josephsson, 2010). While such studies show the benefits of theatre for marginalized groups such as refugees, the benefits for a minority (but relatively privileged) group such as ALTs living in Japan have not been extensively researched thus far. The research questions in this study aim to fill this gap in the literature.

Research Questions

This paper describes how participation in a musical using *Tosaben* can influence language learning and community integration in general. This differs from many other studies which have typically researched students studying a foreign language in classroom-based situations with various degrees of autonomy but ultimately under the supervision and/or control of a teacher. In contrast, Genki is entirely volunteer-driven and community-led, with no official authority figure, classroom accountability or final grade. In this way, Genki can be seen as a successful long-term, community building project. Through the experiences of past participants, this paper examines the following questions (see Appendix A for responses to other questions):

1. Why do people decide to join Genki?
2. What effect did participating in Genki have on peoples' Japanese language learning?
3. How did joining Genki affect community integration?
4. What are the positive and negative aspects of participation in Genki?

Methodology

This project involved describing and reporting on four of nine qualitative responses to a survey (see Appendix A) submitted by 35 former Genki participants. The survey featured open-ended questions and was anonymous. A link to the survey was posted on the Kochi AJET Facebook page on August 8, 2021 (Kochi AJET, n.d.), a place where current and former Kochi JETs interact online. In addition, direct requests were sent to former participants. Although respondents could have participated at any time since the inception of Genki, it is likely that most respondents would have partaken between 2009 and 2015 as these were the participants who were directly contacted with requests. The responses were coded and grouped into different categories to ascertain emergent trends.

Results

This section examines the responses to the survey questions, with answers grouped into themes, the total number of responses in each group reported, and representative quotations included for each group. This is followed by a summary of the overall trends in the data for each question. Responses to the survey were free form; therefore some responses submitted may be complex and touch on, and be grouped into, more than one theme.

Participant Profiles

In order to ascertain basic information, participants were asked a number of questions pertaining to active participant years (Table 1), their roles (Table 2), and approximate Japanese language ability on joining (Table 3).

Table 1

Total number of years participants were involved with Genki

Total number of years	Number of responses ($n = 35$)
1	9
2	10
3	12
4	2
5	2

As can be seen in Table 1, most participants were involved in Genki for more than one year, indicating that many found the experience worth repeating. It should also be noted that JETs are limited to working for a maximum of five years (maximum three years prior to 2007) (CLAIR, n.d.), so some respondents may have participated every year that they resided in Kochi.

Table 2*Types of participant roles in Genki*

Types of roles	Number of responses
Actor (minor role)	11
Actor (major role)	22
Director	8
Writer	5
Choreographer	3
Props and lighting	6

Table 2 indicates that the participant responses to the survey represent a wide variety of roles and experiences within this production. It should be noted that people may have had more than one role during a given production and may also have tried different roles in different years, resulting in a total number of roles greater than the number of participants.

Table 3*Participants' approximate Japanese ability on joining Genki*

Japanese level	Number of respondents (n=35)
Basic/survival	12
Intermediate/conversational	14
Advanced/fluent	9

As shown in Table 3, there was a wide range of self-reported Japanese abilities among the participants. Some had not taken the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), but for those who had, the self-described ranges corresponded as follows:

- Basic/survival: N5-4
- Intermediate/conversational: N4-2
- Advanced/fluent N2-1.

*Reasons for participation***Table 4**

Participant responses to the question “What were your reasons for participating in Genki?”

Type of Response (<i>number</i>)	Sample Quotation (participant code)
To make friends and become part of the foreigner community (18)	“Other JETs in my area were participating and I didn’t want to be left out” (P4)
Having a love of theatre and performing (17)	“I love musicals in general, and I love to sing and dance” (P5)
Wanting to improve Japanese and <i>Tosaben</i> ability (13)	“I love theatre, improving my language acquisition and challenging myself.” (P18)
Wanting to reach out to the local community (8)	“I was drawn to the positive influence that Genki could have on the local community.” (P35)
A desire to volunteer and work for charity (6)	“...I was interested in community outreach/charity...” (P1)
It looked like a fun activity (5)	“It looked like a fun and unique experience.” (P10)
It was something to do during the winter months (4)	“... I needed something to do during the winter. It was getting cold and I was starting to get a little bit depressed.” (P29)
It was recommended (4)	“One of the first things that veteran JETs had told me when I arrived in Kochi was how much fun Genki was. (They were right.)” (P8)
It was easy to join (2)	“I never thought of myself as much of an actor, but the organizers made it very clear that everyone was welcome and there were no prerequisites.” (P5)
Wishing to travel around the prefecture (2)	“...a good opportunity to visit other parts of the prefecture.” (P13)

As the above responses show, the ability to form social connections with both other foreigners and the local community makes up a large part of the motivation for joining Genki. In addition, many people joined because of a pre-existing love of theatre and performance, while others see the experience as a way to challenge themselves and learn new skills (both in terms of language learning and performance).

Participation Japanese language motivation

Table 5

Participant responses to the question “Did participating in Genki affect your motivation/ability to speak Japanese? If yes, how? If not, why not?”

Reason for Response (number)	Sample Quotation (participant code)
Positive	
Increased interest in learning <i>Tosaben</i> specifically (14)	“As a result of being exposed to <i>Tosaben</i> I slowly learned words, grammar and the specifics of <i>Tosaben</i> pronunciation and it made me want to learn more” (P29)
Improvements in pronunciation and intonation (10)	“...the rehearsals and emphasis on intonation and accent helped reinforce natural speech patterns” (P15)
Increased motivation to study Japanese (7)	“Participating in Genki Musical did motivate me to learn more Japanese and appreciate collaboration between foreigners and Japanese people.” (P10)
Improvement in vocabulary and/or grammar (6)	“I learned a good deal of vocabulary from memorizing lines” (P5)
Increased confidence to speak Japanese (5)	“It definitely helped bolster my confidence in learning Japanese, after the first year as a cast member I walked away with feeling that if I could manage <i>Tosaben</i> I can manage regular Japanese just fine.” (P9)

Inspired to study by watching other participants (4)	“I wanted a bigger role in order to improve my Japanese but my role had one speaking line over and over, so I was a little disappointed, but I learned from watching other people rehearse.” (P1)
Being better able to talk with the local community (4)	“...it actually helped when conversing particularly with older people in my town, especially using the different verb conjugations, because of how strong their <i>Tosaben</i> could be” (P24)
Appreciated direct feedback from <i>Tosaben</i> native speakers on speaking (3)	“Yes, it was motivating to have small group tuitions with a native speaker.” (P25)
Improving kanji reading (1)	“...by translating the script I was able to increase the amount of kanji I knew.” (P30)
Neutral or Mixed	
Already proficient in Japanese and so saw no improvements (3)	“I was already in a town where I had to speak [Japanese] all day, so I actually spoke more English in GENKI than in my workdays” (P11)
Had few or no lines to speak and so didn’t need to practice Japanese (2)	“Honestly, probably not. It just wasn't really needed behind the curtain” (P13)
Felt non-standard Japanese wasn’t useful outside of Kochi (2)	“Although it was fun at the time whilst in Kochi, I was conscious of sounding like a 'country men' everywhere else in Japan i.e. Tokyo” (P34)
Too busy rehearsing GENKI to study Japanese (1)	“I was so busy most of the time that I didn't have a chance to focus on learning Japanese beyond what was required for my role.” (P35)
Negative	
Difficulty using <i>Tosaben</i> decreased confidence in standard Japanese ability (1)	“It kind of negatively affected my motivation in that the <i>Tosaben</i> dialect and accent was hard to mimic, and it made me wonder if my standard Japanese was up to par. I knew then as I know now that it was irrational thinking but it did make me feel a bit insecure.” (P3)

As can be seen from Table 5 above, for the majority of participants, participating in Genki had a positive effect on motivation and various aspects of learning Japanese, such as speaking, confidence, and vocabulary, although there was no one specific aspect of language learning that improved, according to the respondents' information.

Community relationships

Table 6

Participant responses to the question "Did participating in Genki affect your relationship with the community (co-workers, students, other foreign residents)? If yes, how? If not, why not?"

Reason for Response (number)	Sample Quotation (participant code)
Positive effect	
Strengthened relationships with the other foreign residents participating (26)	"Definitely helped me get to know other JETs" (P13)
Improved co-worker relations (12)	"I found my coworkers appreciated my effort as I believed it showed my investment in the community." (P18)
Bonding with the local community (9)	"With the local Japanese community, I made friends with people who I would not have otherwise met, such as local translators, event space organizers, media personnel, etc." (P30)
Making friends with the Japanese volunteers (8)	"My coworkers and students were not involved but I did make friends with Japanese native volunteers too." (P19)
Improved relations with students (5)	"Some of my students and teachers from the school were there. I became a sort of 'mini celeb' when went back to school." (P34)
Mixed effect	
Personality conflicts with some production members (2)	"It strengthened some relationships while at the same time souring others, especially the bossy, easily-irritable members." (P3)

No effect	
Lack of interest from their office colleagues (1)	“my office didn't really care about the musical, unfortunately, as they had different priorities at the time.” (P6)

Table 7

Reasons for positive responses to the question “Did participating in Genki affect your relationship with the community (co-workers, students, other foreign residents)?”

Reason for Positive Effect (number)	Sample Quotation (participant code)
Breaking down barriers to communication (10)	“I was able to use some of the language I picked up during rehearsals in my daily life, helping me make connections with the aunties in my local area. I had a positive conversation point at work, with neighbors and friends and they appreciated my attempts to understand and use <i>Tosaben</i> ” (P15)
Bonding with others over learning <i>Tosaben</i> (6)	“my co-workers and students were highly supportive of me participating in Genki and would actually help me with my lines during down-time at school.” (P30)
Having a reason to interact with others (5)	“I'm fairly shy and having a shared project over a period of time allowed me to get to know people, and gave me the time to come out of my shell.” (P5)
Enjoyed travelling to other places in the prefecture and leaving their small towns (5)	“touring Kochi with our production and seeing the reaction of Japanese people to the performance did make me feel closer to the Japanese community” (P10)
This project brings people with similar interests together (2)	“I think the play attracted people with similar interests (such as community involvement and artistic performance), which helped me to be comfortable and become friends with them” (P21)

Participating in Genki was overwhelmingly positive in terms of social connections, both within the foreigner community and with the local Japanese community (Table 6). This was due both to having increased reasons and opportunities to interact with others, as well as mutual respect for the local culture which was a factor in developing meaningful relationships with the local community (Table 7).

Positive participation results

Table 8

Responses to the question “What was the best thing about participating in Genki? Why?”

Type of Response (number)	Sample Quotation (participant code)
Spending time with cast members (24)	“Making friends with other JETs and hanging out. I really struggled getting out and socializing, especially from being out in the countryside, so being part of Genki got me in contact with amazing and fun people and I'm super grateful for that.” (P24)
The experience of making the show and performing (16)	“Working with other cast members, particularly when it came to the songs and dancing, was a lot of fun.” (P1)
Making connections with the local community (9)	“Working together to create something and building a connection between JETs and the people of Kochi.” (P18)
Improvements in Japanese language ability and confidence (6)	“I'm really proud of the way I went from being unable to read a complete line of Japanese/ <i>Tosaben</i> to being able to read my lines (with Kanji) perfectly and recite my lines almost perfectly...” (P7)
The touring experience (4)	“Touring the prefecture was such a blast, I looked forward to it every year.” (P5)
The freedom to choose roles (2)	“I loved how free we were to define our own roles (e.g. Composing songs, directing, producing set/props)” (P6)

The above responses closely correspond with the reasons for participating in Genki (Table 4), indicating that many participants received their desired outcome. In particular, Genki allowed closer relationships within the Genki community (both foreign cast members and local Japanese volunteers), as well as with the local Japanese community. However, the process of creating and touring the theatre production itself was a highlight for many people. In addition, many people felt that their Japanese knowledge and confidence improvements were a major positive.

Negative participation results

Table 9

Responses to the question “What were some problems with participating in Genki? Why?”

Type of Response (number)	Sample Quotation (participant code)
Long rehearsals and scheduling problems (14)	“I had to sit around long hours during rehearsal a lot [because] I had a small role.” (P1)
Issues with other cast members’ commitment and ability (9)	“Inevitably there is drama. It's an intense four months, and it is hard for people to commit to the entire time, skills aren't always a match, interpersonal conflicts happen. Depending the level of commitment, you can get some people pulling some hellish sabotage on the others.” (P2)
Interpersonal conflicts (8)	“...the leadership was a bit impatient at times and didn’t really treat us with respect during the tour” (P1)
Lack of community support and knowledge (7)	“... outside of the flyer and a radio appearance, there was little effort put into promotion therefore we didn’t get the exposure necessary to raise awareness or receive additional donations.” (P1)
Problems with having too many creators (4)	“...since each act is traditionally written by a different person, the play can seem very disjointed and completely nonsensical with no running plot. ... I don’t think crating a play works as a coop, I think you need a dedicated writer or director creating a plot and story that makes sense.” (P16)

Long travel times from remote areas to the rehearsal venue (4)	“Kochi is quite a big prefecture and the fact that everything was run out of Kochi city meant that the time investment for some people was inevitably a lot bigger in order to account for hours of travel every weekend.” (P6)
Having to contribute money (2)	“Cast and crew had to contribute a lot of money in order for the show to even [happen] and in the end, we could’ve just pooled that money into the donation pot and ended up with more money than we actually raised from performances.” (P1)
Problems with equipment and facilities (2)	“There was no technical training for equipment we would borrow at venues, and some equipment was old and not safe to use (for example, some of the lighting switches would be sparking) which greatedened the risk to some people's safety.” (P19)
Memorizing (1)	“My Japanese wasn't strong at the time and it was in a new dialect not taught in books. Only way was just to 'memorize’” (P34)
Nothing (3)	“No problems.” (P33)

As the above comments illustrate, when a large, volunteer-driven community theatre project is created, fostering positive interpersonal relationships and proper organization are essential to the proper functioning of the endeavor. Problems occur when there is a lack of clear authority for creative decisions and a lack of consequences for non-fulfillment of duties. In addition, proper organization in terms of scheduling and promotion is essential for lessening the burden on individual cast members as well as making the production successful in terms of community engagement (the ultimate goal of a performance).

Discussion

The Genki *Tosaben* Musical is a unique event combining intercultural communication, community integration, charity, and language learning through theatre. In order to better understand this production, we used the results of a survey that included responses from a wide variety of participants in terms of their roles, Japanese language ability, and number of times that they participated. This paper focused on four main areas;

motivation to join Genki, how participation affects language learning, the effect on community integration, and the experience of participation itself (both positive and negative).

By describing the experiences of past participants in this production, future participants in Genki, or other productions that wish to emulate it, can see what has been successful thus far, while also learning about potential problems and how to avoid them.

Participation motivation

There were many factors for participant motivation and respondents often reported more than one reason for participation. However, it seemed that social connections, within both the foreigner community and the local Japanese community, was the main factor. It is important to remember that, as many JETs were placed in small rural towns, there were few opportunities for interaction with other English-speaking people of the same age. In addition, the strong *Tosaben* dialect of the locals can create an additional barrier to communication, even among those JETs already proficient in Japanese. Thus, a project like Genki that could bring people together helped give participants reason and opportunity to interact with others, potentially helping their integration into the community and aiding mental health. In addition, many people had a pre-existing love of performance and so were motivated to participate irrespective of circumstances, while others hoped to gain increased knowledge of Japanese and *Tosaben*. These aspects were all interconnected: the shared love of performance helped in forming social connections with other Genki members and the increased ability to communicate in *Tosaben* with the local community resulted in increased interactions with all members of the Kochi community.

Language learning

It should be noted that the explicit goal of Genki is not language learning, but rather community outreach and cross-cultural understanding (GENKI Youth Association, 2021a). Furthermore, the participants in Genki were almost in all full-time workers, rather than students of Japanese, though many had studied Japanese previously or were in the process of studying, and had a wide range of prior Japanese knowledge and abilities. However, most interactions off-stage were in English.

Although language learning was not the most common or primary motivation for initial signup to Genki, nonetheless many participants reported improvements in Japanese language learning in terms of motivation and ability. Other improvement can be expected in the context of theatre in terms of line memorization and extensive speaking practice. In the

case of Genki, actors had opportunities to get personalized help with speaking nuance from local volunteers, and even actors already proficient in standard Japanese could challenge themselves to learn an additional dialect.

Since *Tosaben* is such a key feature of the local community identity, by learning this dialect actors indicated that they were able to integrate into the community easier than if they only spoke standard Japanese. This ability to connect with local residents in the workplace and within the larger community proved to be a powerful motivator in Japanese language acquisition and lead to more opportunities to practice daily outside the theatre rehearsals and production.

Community integration

In terms of community integration, through Genki there were two communities involved: the multinational English-speaking (mostly JET) foreigner community and the local Japanese community. Respondents indicated that participating in Genki was generally helpful in becoming part of both of these communities. In terms of the foreign community, it gave a people reason to gather together and a shared project to bond over. For the local community, participation served as an icebreaker and an indication of respect for local culture, helping to break down barriers at work and within the community. The only caveat to these positive experiences was that interpersonal relationships could sour due to personality clashes rather than issues of cross-cultural discord.

Lessons from both positive and negative experiences

In terms of the positive and negative aspects of Genki itself, most respondents were positive about the experience. The majority of the positive aspects mirrored the reasons that respondents gave for originally signing up: increased social contacts with other cast members, the performance experience, learning Japanese, and making connections with the local community, and Genki delivered. In addition, the sense of purpose for each production had many benefits. Since Genki was a fundraiser for local student study abroad scholarships, there was a sense of doing good within the local community for the participants. This fundraising aspect also helped to build the local community investment in the production as it gave a concrete reason to support and attend the endeavor beyond the simple novelty of seeing foreigners speaking in the local dialect. However, there were also frustrations with regards to efficiency in terms of the money raised juxtaposed with the effort invested in the production.

Although interpersonal relationships often improved as a result of participating in Genki, they were also the source for negative experiences. In particular, in a group effort such as theatre production, if certain cast members do not fulfill the demands required of their role, this can result in additional stress for everyone else. Another issue was that, for members living outside of Kochi City, there were many additional demands in terms of longer commute times, therefore efficient scheduling was important to minimize this burden. Finally, despite the ability to perform multiple types of roles being considered positive, having a large number of people in creative roles sometimes lead to problems with story coherence. As there was no overall authority figure responsible for the production, it became difficult to accommodate interpersonal conflicts and other issues. Notwithstanding, by offering a wide variety of acting roles both main cast and minor parts, as well as a variety of participation methods (writing, directing, choreography, prop/costume construction, and technical support), many participants appreciated being able to find suitable roles for their talent and commitment.

Study limitations

Genki is an entirely volunteer driven enterprise and, as a result, the conclusions reached in this paper may not directly apply to other situations, such as when participation is required for course credit. In addition, the participants surveyed were recalling events that took place several years prior, and so some of the more detailed memories may have faded. Finally, all language learning benefits were based on subjective recollection as opposed to concrete pre- and post-test results. Therefore, future researchers may wish to examine these perceived increases in skills quantitatively or compare them to results of a control group of JETs who did not participate in order to more objectively measure the effects.

Conclusion

In summary, regardless of the role, participants in Genki generally had a positive experience, particularly in terms of community integration and social connection. There were also many benefits in terms of language learning (both standard Japanese and *Tosaben*), although this was not the primary motivation for most participants to join Genki.

However, based on the results of this study, some general recommendations can be given for future Genki productions or for others who may wish to recreate this experience elsewhere. First, it should be noted that in a group effort like theatre production, the commitment of individuals is important for the successful functioning of the group. If one

individual does not fulfill their role, this can create a burden on all the other members of the group and has the potential to sabotage the entire production. While members of the group can grow closer through their shared experiences, personality conflicts can also be exacerbated, ultimately leading to a breakdown in relationships. With this in mind, clear communication is important so that participants in a project such as this have a clear sense of the commitment required before joining and that any personal conflicts between members preempted to avoid escalation. In addition, having a clear shared vision of the production and direction through good communication between the director, writers, and actors can also help the production be coherent and successful. An additional factor is equality among participants. In the case of Genki, there were potential barriers to participation due to long distance travel requirements, as well as required financial contributions. These factors should be mitigated as much as possible, by scheduling rehearsal times in such a way that those taking long journeys to participate in rehearsals have their scenes concentrated over a few days to reduce the number of trips required. Ideally, factors such as disparities in income and commuting expenses should also be considered when asking for monetary contributions from participants, or alternatively reducing the money offered to scholarships to first cover all operational expenses.

Finally, despite the potential issue mentioned above, Genki has been a long-running and successful grassroots project that has helped foster connections between the local Japanese and foreigner communities through theatre. This project can potentially serve as a guide and inspiration for similar undertakings in other communities across Japan.

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Appendix A

Survey questions and full responses

1. How many years were you involved in Genki and in what roles? E.g. 1 year in minor role(s), 1 year props/choreography/writing, 1 year in major role.
2. What was your Japanese ability when you participated in Genki?
3. What was your JLPT level (if known) when you participated in Genki?
4. Did participating in Genki affect your motivation/ability to speak Japanese? If yes, how? If not, why not?
5. Did participating in Genki affect your relationship with the community (co-workers, students, other foreign residents)? If yes, how? If not, why not?
6. What were your reasons for participating in Genki?
7. What was the best thing about participating in Genki? Why?
8. What were some problems with participating in Genki? Why?
9. Any additional comments about your experience with Genki?

Note: The answers to questions 1-3 are discussed in detail in the Participant Profiles section of the paper.

Did participating in Genki affect your motivation/ability to speak Japanese? If

P yes, how? If not, why not?

I wanted a bigger role in order to improve my Japanese but my role had one speaking line over and over, so I was a little disappointed, but I learned from watching other

1 people rehearse.

2 It helped my fluency and pronunciation

It kind of negatively affected my motivation in that the Tosaben dialect and accent was hard to mimic, and it made me wonder if my standard Japanese was up to par. I knew then as I know now that it was irrational thinking but it did make me feel a bit

3 insecure.

Yes. Became interested in words unique to the prefecture's dialects (Hata-ben and

4 Tosa-ben), increases motivation to study for JLPT

Yes. I learned a good deal of vocabulary from memorizing lines. Performing also

5 helped me learn to speak with more expression.

6 Yes - fostered interest in Tosa-ben

My Japanese ability improved thanks to my third year on Genki. Pronunciation and

7 fluency drastically improved. Probably no change to grammar.

Yes, it made me much more interested in the local dialect, and I had plenty of incentive to speak Japanese to communicate with the many non-English speakers

8 involved with putting on the shows.

It definitely helped bolster my confidence in learning Japanese, after the first year as a cast member I walked away with feeling that if I could manage Tosa-ben I can manage regular Japanese just fine.

9

I only had English lines so it didn't help my Japanese speaking ability. However, listening to the other actors helped my Japanese listening skills. Participating in Genki Musical did motivate me to learn more Japanese and appreciate collaboration between

10 foreigners and Japanese people.

I was already in a town where I had to speak JP all day, so I actually spoke more English in GENKI than in my workdays. I imagine if I worked in the city it would be

11 reversed.

Not necessarily as I was already quite proficient, but it allowed me to learn more about

12 the Tosa accent.

13 Honestly, probably not. It just wasn't really needed behind the curtain.

Yes, definitely. It exposed me to the local dialect and gave me a chance to see other
14 foreigners working hard to perform in Japanese as well.

Yes. It had a positive effect on both motivation and ability. Meeting people in a
bilingual environment helped ease nervousness about communicating and speaking
Tosaben on stage boosted my confidence levels. Meeting local Japanese people gave
me reason to practise spoken Japanese more often and the rehearsals and emphasis on
15 intonation and accent helped reinforce natural speech patterns.

It helped me learn and understand more about the local dialect than I would have on
my own. I spoke and studied the same amount before and after the musical though.
16 (Which was a fair amount).

It did not boost my motivation in any large and direct way, but it got me excited about
17 Tosa-ben and likely boosted my confidence.

Yes! It was so much fun to participate and made learning the language less
intimidating. It was especially helpful to have dialect experts and locals coach us on
our accents. To be able to perform with confidence helped me apply what I learned to
18 my interactions outside of the musical.

When I took the speaking roles, I got native feedback on my lines which helped
improve my ability to speak Japanese and I practiced a lot. It helped maintain my
19 motivation to speak Japanese and didn't hurt it.

20 Yes, but not speak Japanese. I like history.

It was a lot of fun to play with Tosaben and sing in Japanese. After becoming more
fluent in Japanese, it was more fun for me to participate in the musical because I was
more able to ad lib or improvise if I or someone else forgot a line. I learned a few new
21 words and ideas, but I think the main ability improvement for me was pronunciation.

I would say not so much in the first two. I more participated for social reasons. I was
more motivated in the third year because I had a larger role and wanted to make sure I
performed well. Spending so much time learning my lines and practicing with cast
22 certainly correlated to more confidence speaking Japanese outside of the musical.

23 yes

Yes, a little, in that it taught me some vocab I didn't know (like "taiyou" for "sun"!)
Including words in Tosaben (of course) and it actually helped when conversing
particularly with older people in my town, especially using the different verb
24 conjugations, because of how strong their Tosaben could be.

Yes, it was motivating to have small group tuitions with a native speaker. It was also
25 nice to be complimented on my learnings from it.

It gave me an outlet to learn more Japanese and learn words that I wouldn't have
26 learned in any other situation.

Probably not. I already had a high level of Japanese ability and spoke Japanese with
27 my coworkers and neighbors daily.

Yes. It made me want to study intonation more and drastically helped my speaking
28 ability.

Yes, it did but rather than motivate me to speak Japanese, it made me want to learn
Tosaben. I think the reason for this is that when I was practicing my lines or a scene
from the musical, everything was in Tosaben. As a result of being exposed to Tosaben
I slowly learned words, grammar and the specifics of Tosaben pronunciation and it
29 made me want to learn more.

Since I had not studied Japanese before coming to Japan, Genki was one of the first
exposures to a type of formalized Japanese language study I had, and I was able study
Japanese in a way that emphasized speaking (most important skill for my immediate
needs in Kochi). When acting, you need to know the tone of what you are saying, how
your lines interacts with other actors' lines, and general pacing of a scene, which
forces you to translate and internalize the Japanese vocab/grammar (Tosa-ben) you are
interacting with.

For my second and third years I became more comfortable with speaking Japanese and
focused on reading comprehension for the script- by translating the script I was able to
increase the amount of kanji I knew, and I incorporated the genki script into my
overall study plan for the summer N4 JLPT (maybe not a great idea since Tosa-ben is
30 very different from standard Japanese!)

I would say it improved my speaking ability, but I already had a high motivation
31 beforehand, so that remained unchanged

32 Yes - it motivated me to learn another dialect of Japanese (Tosa-ben)

Yes it definitely did. I was starting to learn Japanese but Genki encouraged me to
explore Tosa Ben the dialect in the Kochi area. My lines in the show needed to be
delivered in a very strong Tosa Ben accent so I was keen to do it right and get across
33 the right humour. I concentrated on learning this dialect.

Hmmmmm for me not so much as it was in a heavy Tosa ben accent which I didn't see the use for it outside of Kochi. Although it was fun at the time whilst in Kochi, I was
34 conscious of sounding like a 'country men' everywhere else in Japan ie Tokyo

Yes and no. I was so busy most of the time that I didn't have a chance to focus on
35 learning Japanese beyond what was required for my role.

Did participating in Genki affect your relationship with the community (co-workers, students, other foreign residents)? If yes, how? If not, why not?

Yes, it improved my relationship with the community somewhat. I enjoyed working with some of the other JETs and my relationships with many cast/crew improved, but my opinion of some participants/staff improved. I was happy to receive support from
1 friends/coworkers who came to see the shows.

It improved my relationship with my fellow ALTs as well as gave me more Japanese
2 people to communicate with

It strengthened some relationships while at the same time souring others, especially
3 the bossy, easily-irritable members. I don't work well with such people.

4 Yes- friendships among ALTs and other foreign residents

Genki had a huge impact on my relationships within the community. I made my best friends through Genki and got to know many, many more people than if I hadn't participated. I'm fairly shy and having a shared project over a period of time allowed me to get to know people, and gave me the time to come out of my shell. It also improved my relationship with one of my JTEs. She was initially skeptical of me when I replaced her favorite ALT, but after seeing me sing and dance she was much
5 friendlier.

No - my office didn't really care about the musical, unfortunately, as they had different
6 priorities at the time

Yes, a little. I already had a good relationship with co-workers by my third year. They were impressed by my performance in the musical. It was a conversation piece when speaking to local residents who I would make conversation with (discussions about
7 occupation, hobbies, love of Japanese etc.)

Yes. I felt much more linked to the people of Kochi because we were performing for them in their (terribly-accented) language and travelling to all corners of the prefecture
8 to do so. I also got to know everyone who helped the musicals much better than if I

had not been involved, and this included many JETs, locals and other foreign residents.

I was able to make a lot of new friends during my time as a cast member, meeting
9 people i wouldn't get to usually due to the distance they lived from the city.

It brought me closer to my fellow JETs because of all the time we spent together practicing. As I didn't have any Japanese lines, I didn't work directly with a native Japanese speaker to rehearse my lines. So, I didn't personally grow closer to any Japanese natives. However, touring Kochi with our production and seeing the reaction of Japanese people to the performance did make me feel closer to the Japanese
10 community.

11 Yes! I made a lot of friends and was able to integrate into the community better.

Yes, it allowed me to bond with other JET participants and Japanese people who lived
12 in Kochi city who helped out.

Yes, received a lot of interest, mostly from coworkers. Definitely helped me get to
13 know other JETs.

I didn't feel any long-term effects, but by performing at many different areas in Shikoku I got to interact with a wide variety of Japanese people across the prefecture and make them laugh 😊 That definitely made me feel more welcome in the community. Relationships-wise I got closer mainly with my fellow cast members, not
14 the larger community.

Yes, in a mostly positive way. I gained more friends - both Japanese and other foreign residents. I gained knowledge of local culture (through the mixing of local and western storytelling aspects in the musical). I was able to use some of the language I picked up during rehearsals in my daily life, helping me make connections with the aunties in my local area. I had a positive conversation point at work, with neighbours and friends and they appreciated my attempts to understand and use Tosaben. There was one unfortunate event with one local resident who had joined Genki, who had been awkward but kind, but they essentially ended up stalking some other Genki participants, which caused quite a bit of tension in the international community at the
15 time.

Yes, I got to know more people in Kochi and it was nice to see interactions with the audience and the plays. It didn't affect my interaction in the long term since my
16 village where I worked was fairly removed from Kochi.

It greatly improved my relationship with other JETs on the musical and it improved
17 my relationship with many different community members that I invited.

Absolutely. Friendships were made both within the expat community as well as with
other Kochi citizens. I found my coworkers appreciated my effort as I believed it
showed my investment in the community. Nothing bonds people together like activity
and I made some lifelong friends in that musical group! Many of whom I still speak
18 with regularly.

Yes! Genki had a great sense of community where we came together with other
foreign residents with the same purpose of working together to make the musical
happen and helping each other out which was all voluntary on our part. My coworkers
and students were not involved but I did make friends with Japanese native volunteers
19 too. I got to know everyone really well, especially with the camp we did every year.

20 Yes, I like if I have many friends around the world

Most definitely, I met many people in the foreign community thanks to the musical.
Some of them I am still friends with to this day, years after performing. I think the
play attracted people with similar interests (such as community involvement and
artistic performance), which helped me to be comfortable and become friends with
21 them.

Definitely with my co-workers! Telling them about the musical and seeing how hard I
was working to learn my lines was a neat conversation starter. They were eager to
learn more about the musical and teach me some Tosaben. My students got a kick of
photos of me in costume and videos of me performing. They appreciated the effort of
22 me taking part in Japanese culture.

23 yes

Yes, it helped me simply by getting me out the door. I lived in the countryside and I'm
an introvert, so participating in Genki was a way to force myself to try to connect with
other JETS/ Foreigners living in my prefecture. It was the best choice I made on that
front, I enjoyed hanging out with the other participants. My relationships were good
already with my community and students and the like, and that remained largely
24 unchanged.

Yes, my colleagues were impressed that I took part in it. They supported me by
25 coming out to see the musical.

26 It allowed me to make friends and have a social outlet.

It gave me more exposure to the prefecture and allowed me to visit places I otherwise wouldn't have. Through this I got to know the other JETs in Genki quite well and
27 interacted with many of the locals when we performed in their towns.

I think so. I think my BoE enjoyed seeing me participate. It was a good conversation
28 starter too, and my students enjoyed seeing me put myself out there.

Yes, it did. I think the fact that it was not only a musical but also a fundraiser to financially help students in Kochi study abroad made it an event that people all over Kochi were interested in seeing. Furthermore, the novelty of it being a musical in the Kochi dialect managed and performed by foreign residents in Kochi made it a spectacle that was sure to attract people's attention. I think everyone that saw the performances were always amazed. Maybe they also felt thankful that foreigners were making the effort to share their love for both the culture and the language of Kochi through this musical. As for foreign residents, the people who participate in the musical all grew stronger out of both necessity and also as the result of being part of the musical. I feel that the performances would suffer if the relationship of everyone involved in the musical wasn't a strong one. Foreigners who see it, might also become interested in joining the following year. Overall, I think that Genki has a positive
29 effect on the community and everyone involved in putting on the musical.

Yes, my co-workers and students were highly supportive of me participating in Genki, and would actually help me with my lines during down-time at school. With the local Japanese community, I made friends with people who I would not have otherwise met, such as local translators, event space organizers, media personnel, etc. With the AJET/foreign community, it definitely deepened my bonds with other ALTs and CIRs (from JET or other programs), Kochi University students, and long-term expats in Kochi. Since I lived in Kochi City and had a large apartment, I would host 3-4 Genki cast/crew each weekend, which definitely helped with making new friends and getting
30 involved with community events.

It definitely improved my relationships with fellow ALTs, but outside of that, I don't
31 think it really had an effect on those with my community

Yes, I developed deeper relationships with the volunteers and foreign resident
32 cast/crew. It was a talking point when interacting with my students and coworkers.

Yes I met a lot of Foreign residents and other teachers who were involved in the
33 musical. I also met a lot of Japanese people through the musical also. My Japanese

improved because I needed to use Japanese to communicate with the non English speakers and this motivated me to try and speak Japanese whenever I got the chance.

Yep. Some of my students and teachers from the school were there. I became a sort of 'mini celeb' when went back to school. Although the game didn't last long
34 before it went back to normal lol

Yes. It allowed my Japanese friends in the community to connect with the foreign community in a more personal way through shared appreciation and respect for
35 differing cultures.

P What were your reasons for participating in Genki?

I was interested in doing something with which I had no experience (theater), I was interested in community outreach/charity, I was interested in having something to do during the lonely, dull winter months, other ALTs had recommended joining the
1 performance, etc.

Finding a peer group during my first year and then to continue with the community
2 aspect in the years afterwards

3 Social connection

4 Other JETs in my area were participating and I didn't want to be left out

I love musicals in general, and I love to sing and dance. I never thought of myself as much of an actor, but the organizers made it very clear that everyone was welcome and there were no prerequisites. I was excited to get on stage and perform. I had never
5 been in a musical, but I had done some dance performances.

6 Love of theatre and singing

First year was to do something with my peers. It looked like fun.
The third year was for many reasons: I love creating costumes and props and could help. I love dancing and wanted to help with making dances. I wanted to improve my Japanese. I wanted to be a part of the process from start to finish, this included story development, poster deployment, selling tickets, touring and performing. It was an
7 experience I wanted to take part in fully, perhaps as it was my last year in Japan.

One of the first things that veteran JETs had told me when I arrived in Kochi was how much fun Genki was. (They were right.) I'd been involved in performances at school and university, so I wasn't put off by being on stage, going to rehearsals, etc. I also
8 wanted to use the opportunity to get to know the community better.

To commit to a “say yes” mentality during my time in Japan, someone asked if I
9 wanted to do it and I said yes.

It looked like a fun and unique experience. Plus it’s kind of a rite of passage for
10 Kochi JETs.

11 I wanted to do something social.

12 To connect with other JET participants and other Japanese people outside my town.

I mostly just wanted to engage with other JETs, but I also worked on plays for many
years before JET, so I felt like I had experience to contribute. Also a good opportunity
13 to visit other parts of the prefecture.

To get to know other JETs, for fun, to practice my Japanese, to interact with the
14 community outside of the classroom, to volunteer

15 Learn more about the local dialect, meet new people and I wanted to dance.

I always liked theater and then I got frustrated with how poorly led some of the
productions were, so I wanted to create a play that had a more meaningful impact on
the community. That frustration led me into writing and directing the musical my
16 second year I was involved.

17 Fun, volunteering / charity, community-building, culture-building

18 I love theatre, improving my language acquisition and challenging myself.

Community involvement, practicing Japanese (especially the local dialect), a way to
make friends with similar interests and for the fun activities that came along with
19 volunteering

20 Love it

21 I love acting, and I had heard it was an excellent event in the Kochi community.

The first couple of years, the reason was mainly social. I wanted an opportunity to
meet more folks in the prefecture and have a fun activity during the winter. I also was
involved in theater in high school and college, so it seemed like a natural fit. My third
year, I was definitely interested in a larger role as I had been more focused on studying
Japanese. I looked at it as a challenge and felt good about the result after a lot of hard
22 work.

23 community

Primarily, to get out and try to socialize and connect with the other foreigners in my
prefecture. Which worked! And also because I missed acting. I’ve never been good at
24 it, but I love being part of the theater nonetheless.

25 Have fun with fellow JETs while learning the local dialect.

26 I like musical theatre and wanted to do it.

I did theater as a child up through high school and wanted to get back into it. I also wanted to connect with the other JETs more (I was placed in a very rural and isolated location).

27
28 Volunteer work, improving Japanese ability, making friends

There were a few reasons why I joined Genki. The first one is that I needed something to do during the winter. It was getting cold and I was starting to get a little bit depressed. The second reason is that I had gotten a taste of performing when I participated in a 24 hour theater project in university and was looking for another opportunity to perform. I did not think it would be in Kochi nor under the form of a musical in the Kochi dialect, but when I heard about this musical, I knew I had to participate. The third reason is that I was fascinated by Tosaben. Every day, I heard it all around me, but for the most part I never understood what was being said. By participating in this musical, I would be able to learn more Tosaben. The fourth reason is that I like challenging myself. I had never participated in a musical so given the opportunity to do so, I thought this would be a good challenge. The fifth reason is that I had seen many musicals performed by my theater friends in university so given the opportunity to do it myself, I jumped at the chance.

29
30 My predecessor was involved with Genki so my school really encouraged me to join, since they knew that I was interested in learning more Tosa-ben. I didn't have experience in theatre or musicals before coming to Japan, but I always enjoyed watching them and thought it would be fun to have an artistic outlet in addition to the Kochi sports groups I was in.

31 I wanted to get better at Japanese, as well as step outside of my comfort zone

I wanted to be involved in the local community; I had an interest in the performing arts; I wanted the experiences of helping drive a large project as a director; and I wanted to use and deepen my understanding of Japanese.

32
33 I joined Genki to meet other teachers and expand my network. I wanted to meet some new people and I also wanted to have a laugh. I also joined for the opportunity to practice Japanese in a fun way.

34 Get to know the other JETs better. Also, it was a way for me to explore and learn more about Kochi Ken as a whole and not just the city.

35 I was drawn to the positive influence that Genki could have on the local community.

P What was the best thing about participating in Genki? Why?

Working with other cast members, particularly when it came to the songs and dancing, was a lot of fun. The cooperation and instruction were particularly great the year I

1 joined (2015).

2 The sense of community, purpose and friendships formed

3 Social connection

4 Community among participants

The best part about participating in Genki was spending time with really awesome people, and having the shared experience of bringing the show to life. Touring the

5 prefecture was such a blast, I looked forward to it every year.

I loved how free we were to define our own roles (e.g. Composing songs, directing,

6 producing set/props)

I'm really proud of the way I went from being unable to read a complete line of Japanese/Tosaben to being able to read my lines (with Kanji) perfectly and recite my lines almost perfectly (I had a few lines removed for memory). The worried faces around the table when I struggled to read my lines that first day motivated me to show

7 them how much I could improve (in a good way. I knew it would take commitment).

Helping people with talent to show off their talent by doing cool things. We had amazing singers, songwriters, dancers, choreographers, artists, costume designers, comedians, writers. I'm not good at any of those things, but I am good at organising and encouraging people, so I was able to help bring all of those people together to

8 make something we could all be proud of.

Definitely the camaraderie, you're able to see a bunch of people with a common goal banding together (sometimes literally) from rehearsal to performances. There's a

9 special type of bond formed there that I don't think any of us will forget about.

The performances were great but my favorite part was rehearsing together and in the process, growing closer to everyone involved. This was my favorite part because of all

10 the memories I made.

The social aspect; I lived in a small town with only obaasans and ojiisans, so it was

11 nice to be able to communicate with people my own age.

12 Building community with other people.

13 Community building inside the JET community, community outreach to Kochi

The original script, the creativity of the crew, the joy of performing live to an audience, the retreat we do with the full cast, working on something creative with a team of people (I forgot how much I've missed that)

14
15 The people. Some of those friendships made or reinforced during Genki have lasted for years.

The best thing was bringing together the ALT and CIR JET members to learn and practice speaking and performing in Japanese and working with local volunteers to create an international production. It was great to see people with all different levels of language and theater experience put time in to create something for the local community to watch and enjoy.

16
17 Working together to create something and building a connection between JETs and the people of Kochi.

The confidence I gained and the friendships I made. I lived in the countryside so social events were not as accessible. Participating with everyone helped me feel connected to the JET community and allowed me to see a lot of Kochi!

The sense of community with the volunteers and even for those we performed for. A lot of fun came out of participating in all aspects of the musical. It left the biggest impression on me and fills me with a lot of good memories and experiences in Japan. Acting. Sometimes we need other activity other than usually we do.

19
20
21 Probably making cool memories with cool people. It's still a touchstone for times I hang out with my old Genki friends. Also, directing and acting in the plays were a lot of fun!

I loved the camaraderie shared with the cast and crew while traveling around the prefecture. I didn't have a car while in Kochi, so getting to take those road trips were a fantastic way to explore Kochi-ken, meet local people, and foster deeper friendships with other ALTs.

22
23 community

Making friends with other JETs and hanging out. I really struggled getting out and socializing, especially from being out in the countryside, so being part of Genki got me in contact with amazing and fun people and I'm super grateful for that.

24
25 Having fun with local JETs while receiving compliments from my colleagues for my effort in learning the local dialect.

26 Being able to sing and perform every week.

Selfishly, I just loved being on stage, and having the right mix of abilities (I could sing and speak Japanese) gave me the opportunity to be in major roles each year. I also loved making friends with the other JETs (I met my wife, also a JET, while doing Genki), and I thought the mission of Genki was great: grassroots internationalization and raising funds for scholarships to send Japanese students abroad.

28 Making memories and helping the community through grassroots internationalization.

There were so many things that I enjoyed about participating in Genki. If I had to choose just one, I would say it was the performances. Throughout the performances we could see how all of our hard work during the rehearsals paid off and we could also see the smiles we were putting on everyone in the audience's faces as the language and the culture of Kochi came to life through the musical. There was also this so-called Genki magic where, by the time we got to the performances, everything would always come together almost by magic nevermind technical difficulties and lines and songs that hadn't been completely memorized. It just seemed that at the time of performances, everyone wanted to put on a good show and wouldn't let anything ruin that.

The community aspect of it, and the way that the Japanese community embraced it. Three of my best friends from Kochi came from our mutual involvement with Genki. It was difficult sometimes, especially as director, to ensure that everyone was working hard and having fun, but the set-up that was present during my three years of participation fostered a nice atmosphere overall (lots of team-building opportunities, outside practice events, and making sure everyone felt like they were contributing to the event in a unique way). Also, we got to travel the entire prefecture, which was nice, especially when visiting some smaller towns. My favorite performance was in Akaoka-cho, where we got to perform on a traditional kabuki theatre stage.

It left me with some great memories, and seeing the surprise on someone's face when I'd throw out some Tosaben here and there was pretty amusing.

Sharing the enjoyment of the process with the volunteers, cast and crew, especially the live shows, and seeing everyone's hard work come together.

The best thing was definitely the people I met through it and the fun rehearsing. I also loved learning Japanese and particularly Tosa Ben in a fun way.

After having done, felt the accomplishment to be part of something well put together,
34 given the limited resources that we had. The experience afterwards was the best bit.

Being able to form stronger relationships with other participants through a shared
35 vision and goal.

P What were some problems with participating in Genki? Why?

I had to sit around long hours during rehearsal a lot bc I had a small role. Rehearsal
schedules weren't particularly efficient. Also, outside of the flyer and a radio
appearance, there was little effort put into promotion therefore we didn't get the
exposure necessary to raise awareness or receive additional donations. Cast and crew
had to contribute a lot of money in order for the show to even happen and in the end,
we could've just pooled that money into the donation pot and ended up with more
money than we actually raised from performances. Finally, the leadership was a bit
impatient at times and didn't really treat us with respect during the tour. Still, it was an
1 overall positive experience.

Inevitably there is drama. It's an intense four months, and it is hard for people to
commit to the entire time, skills aren't always a match, interpersonal conflicts happen.
Depending the level of commitment, you can get some people pulling some hellish
sabotage on the others. It's the flip side of any group effort and after 3 years it burned
2 me out, even if I really appreciated my first 2 years.

The hectic schedules and some group activities that seemed interminable. I can't
remember specific ones but I do remember they just seemed to stretch out
3 unnecessarily long.

4 It was quite far to travel every weekend from the Hata-gun area.

I can't think of many problems. Rehearsing in a very cold gymnasium was
uncomfortable at times. Some cast members were more motivated to learn their parts
5 than others, but it generally worked out in the end.

Kochi is quite a big prefecture and the fact that everything was run out of Kochi city
meant that the time investment for some people was inevitably a lot bigger in order to
6 account for hours of travel every weekend. This could be quite exhausting!

It is an intense and time consuming event. It was the reason I didn't participate in my
7 2nd year.

It sucked up almost all of my non-work time for about 5 months of each year. I didn't regret this, but maybe I could have been a better ALT if I had used some of that time
8 to work on my teaching skills.

Explaining to my Japanese co-teachers and Japanese colleagues what this was about,
9 why they should see it. For some reason it just never clicked with them.

Aside from technical issues at certain venues, I think we could have brought more audience out to the smaller showings. We put a lot of effort into the production and it would've been nice if more people knew about it. However, I realize that this isn't an
10 easy problem to solve.

I took part in the year of Shintakarajima. There was some breakdown between
11 organizers and participants.

Not sure if this is a problem per say, but other than donations, I never really knew/saw/understood the impact of what we did or what viewers/audience thought of
12 it.

13 Time consuming, occasional creative differences and minor dramas

Sometimes lack of coordination/planning, large time commitment, It really depends on the people in charge for the year. If you have leadership that really care, it can be an amazing experience, but for that to happen, people have to be passionate about it - how much of that energy makes it into the musical tends to vary from year to year ☹️
14 You have to craft the best show you can with the available talent and "genki"ness of the participants.

Tiredness, especially on the last two weekends of back to back performances. You give Genki all your weekends for months, so you have to put any other events on the
15 back burner for a bit.

The problems come from the writing of the musicals and the time restraints on production. Creating a play that makes sense culturally in Japan to Japanese audiences was not always a concern and since each act is traditionally written by a different person, the play can seem very disjointed and completely nonsensical with no running plot. This means that the audience doesn't get interested and the community engagement piece is lacking. It also means that funds for the play then suffer. It also is a task that Kochi CIRs are forced into without a lot of guidance which can be tricky. I
16 don't think crating a play works as a coop, I think you need a dedicated writer or

director creating a plot and story that makes sense. It's not always possible with the members of JET who are there.

Time commitment, difficulties in coordinating large numbers of people, creating a high-quality creative work with many different creators and many different target
17 audiences

I remember it did require a lot of time, and the second year I was unable to commit to
18 the schedule as an actor but I was able to do the lighting.

Some people were focused on perfection and only looked at what was lacking (without constructive criticism) rather than what was accomplished, which could dampen excitement to be involved and motivation to continue. We had some financial problems too (i.e. a very limited budget) in which we would have to pitch in personally to help pay for logistics. There was no technical training for equipment we would borrow at venues, and some equipment was old and not safe to use (for example, some of the lighting switches would be sparking) which greatedened the risk to
19 some people's safety.

20 Communication. Want to talk to other members, but not too much English vocabulary

The time schedule is brutal. Every weekend for months is a big commitment, and is not feasible for me after finding non-ALT work. Also, sometimes interpersonal
21 conflict was irritating and stressful.

I honestly don't remember many! Sometimes rehearsal would start late because people would be out drinking the night before haha. I can't recall anything major going wrong with venues or performances. It could be a big time commitment but definitely worth
22 it.

23 none

The only problem I had was that it was definitely a bit of a commute for me. I did not like the hour to hour and a half commute there and then same back, and then paying for parking because typically to stay with a friend in the city I gotta park somewhere.
24 But, that's it. I can't think of any other problems I had.

Some other participants weren't as committed to the musical and it made rehearsal
25 difficult.

Our performances were all cancelled due to coronavirus. It took up a lot of my time
26 and was a very big commitment.

27 There were always some personality conflicts, but mostly we all got along.

If people didn't put in the time required it hurt the production. It's a lot to ask of people to give up their weekends for three months, but the more successful productions had casts that knew what they signed up for. The worst year was a year when the director only showed up half the time due to work and life commitments. That's what inspired me to direct the following year. I think the success can also be really dependent on the talent pool of volunteers for that year, and getting people to
28 volunteer some years was easier than others.

I don't think there were any major problems, but there were a few minor issues. I think the most important one was commitment to the musical. Because participation was voluntary and there wasn't really a competition to find performers, everyone was allowed to participate. Because rehearsals were on the weekends and there wasn't really any punishment for being late or missing a rehearsal, it was hard to make sure everyone attended rehearsals. While it wouldn't punish the individual who was late or who didn't attend, it did affect all the other performers since they relied on the person to be there in order to get used to saying their lines in conjunction with the other performers. This also meant that sometimes a character or a song had to be removed completely because the person who was late or never attended rehearsal had to be removed from the musical half way through the production. As a result, the musical's story had to be changed in order to compensate for a character or a song being removed. Another issue was the director's ambitious vision. I feel that sometimes the director's would have a vision for the story of the musical that did not take into consideration the fact that everyone who was participating were not only volunteers but also had different levels of acting, singing and dancing experience. As a result, some people would feel overwhelmed during rehearsals due to the stress to get the dance moves or their lines right. As I mentioned previously, some way or another, it always came together, but there were definitely some rehearsals where people felt miserable and even broke down crying. Another issue was advertising the actual event. While I really enjoyed performing, I always felt bad about the turnouts. It always seemed that we would advertise the musical at the last minute and even sometimes just before a performance. I feel that if we had made a more sustained effort earlier on to advertise the musical and not only through the use of posters, we would have been able to attract more people and it would also have been an even
29 people would not only be aware of but look forward to each year. It always seemed to

come as a surprise to the attendees that we were once again doing the musical. I also don't feel like enough effort was made to emphasize the fact that the musical was not only a musical but also a way to raise money to help students in Kochi study abroad. The last issue was sustainability. It never became an issue, but I could see it being the case that there were not enough people to put on the musical. Sure it was easy enough to find performers, but it was always a challenge to find people to make props, manage lights and music.

As an actor, finding motivation to go to practice (especially during cherry blossom season), and as director, motivating everyone to come to practice.

On a general note, ensuring that musicals were funny and entertaining, but also appropriate and inclusive of cast, crew, and audience members. When I was director, there was a cast member who came up with a costume idea which involved drag as a comedic element. While that is common in Japan, I knew there were gender non-conforming/non-binary members of the foreign community in Kochi who would feel excluded or made fun of by that choice. A similar concern is how Kochi people are portrayed, specifically with drinking. I think Kochi people do embrace alcohol culture as a whole, but making sure that when it is brought up in Genki that it does not come across as mean-spirited is very important.

When developing the 2016-2018 scripts, we also had different people write different acts (3-5 writers for each script), so the tone, messages, and song choices were sometimes at odds, which required a lot of fine-tuning. Also, finding members of the Japanese community to translate the script from English --> Japanese --> Tosa-ben. We were often rewriting the script during practices with the help of native Tosa-ben
30 speakers who found errors from the original translations.

I didn't have any problems personally, but I know it was difficult for some of those who lived further away from the city (Tosashimizu, for example) to make it to
31 practices every weekend.

32 Can't think of any.

33 No problems.

Rehearsing and trying to memorise the lines 😊. My Japanese wasn't strong at the
34 time and it was in a new dialect not taught in books. Only way was just to 'memorise'

There is a lack of support from the local Kochi government. Without an official
guiding body, it is incredibly difficult for the people in charge to create a successful
35 musical with the limited time and resources available.

P Any additional comments about your experience with Genki?

I am happy I did it but the experience was a little oversold in my opinion. People said
it's the best thing you'll do on JET, and while I'm glad I joined, it probably doesn't
1 even rank in the top 10-15 things I've done/achieved/experienced whilst in Japan.

I think its a net gain for any ALT, but there will always be people who sabotage the
efforts of others and that was too much in the end and I couldn't do it the last two years
2 I was a JET.

3 It was a lot of fun, and I highly recommend it to future JETs.

4 [No response]

Genki is one of the things I miss most about living in Kochi. There is really nothing
else like it. It's such a great way to celebrate Tosaben and it helps us foreigners to
engage with the language, culture, and history of the area. I think it's also important as
a way of connecting with local people who may have little to no interaction with non-
Japanese folks in their day to day lives. If we're willing to get on stage and look a little
5 foolish, we become more approachable.

It seems that the musical is currently an online only experience due to a combination
of the pandemic and lack of interest. This seems like such a shame to me as it was
6 such a good way to feel closer to the local community!

I loved it. Not only do the funds raised from ticket sales help with scholarships, it's
something the residents of Kochi can be proud of. It's also really good conversation
7 topic!

We often treated it as a bit of an afterthought, but Genki is actually a fundraiser. As
director I not only helped count the money and figure out the bottom line, but I was
part of the committee who reviewed the scholarship applications and decided on
grants. As I recall in my final year we had made an unusually large profit, so we were
able to help 3 Kochi students study abroad that year. Having left Japan later that year I
never had an opportunity to find out what happened to those students, but I really hope
that they've gone onto brilliant careers and that they got as much out of their time
8 abroad as I did from living in Kochi.

9 I hope it's able to continue for future teachers to also be able to participate in.

10 Genki Musical is great and I hope it continues for years to come.

11 I would absolutely do it again.

12 N/A

I love GENKI as an act of community engagement. It shows the community we are interested in our adopted culture while simultaneously giving us an outlet to express ourselves. Puts the "E" in JET, as I always like to say.

14 It was a fun ride! I am very happy I did it during my time on JET.

I loved it both years I was a part of it and the years I got to watch it too. Living in Kochi City meant that lots of people from the rest of the prefecture would ask to crash at your place for the weekends during rehearsal season.

I had a great time and I wish I had gone for it and directed another play my final year. It was a great experience leading people and very creative for me. I also really enjoyed thinking about what children and people in Kochi would enjoy watching and then having them come and react so positively to everything we worked on and enjoy all the jokes and references we made:

17 I'm so grateful I was able to participate in Genki. <3

I will always treasure the time I participated in Genki. It has been almost 10 years and I can still remember most of the lines and songs!

19 I'm thankful I got to participate and would love to do it again!

20 I hope that event continuous every year.

For me, it was a defining part of my JET experience, so much so that I continued after leaving JET. It also helped introduce me to members of the foreign community at a time when I was in my "down" part of culture shock.

It was one of the most meaningful experiences I had while living Japan. Knowing the proceeds went to a good cause made it even better. Participating in the musicals made me feel more connected to Kochi, its history, and its people.

23 gratifying to perform/ accomplish as a group. language ability improved

Enjoyed the heck out of it! It really was a shame, the show for 2020 was honestly going to be amazing and the director had written SUCH a great play. Not having had the chance to film it in its entirety and having had it canceled the week before performances because of the pandemic? Disappointment will linger for a while, but 2021's online play is hopefully going to at least somewhat make up for it!

25 Overall, highly recommend people give it a try!

26 It was really good and I'm waiting for an opportunity to participate again.

27 I love that Genki is still going strong after 20+ years!

I feel like it's dying, and that it's harder and harder to get the younger generation to donate their time, but I hope it can survive for many years to come because I honestly feel like it's a great way for the international community to give back and build

28 bridges with Kochi.

29 [No response]

It was definitely a defining event throughout my three years in Kochi, and I am proud to have been a part of it!

31 All-in-all a great experience, and I'd highly recommend it to anyone!

I have spoke with many foreign and former-foreign nationals about their experiences in their local communities throughout Japan, and virtually none of them had an institution like the Genki Tosa-ben musical to participate in. I believe it is very unique and I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to participate in it.

33 [No response]

When I came back to London, I met a guy from Kochi news paper who found me whilst he was visiting London. And he asked if he could write an article about my experience. I'll share the link

Overall, it was a positive experience but I don't believe Genki really contributes to the community in a way that is beneficial for all the time and effort that's required. If the local Japanese government and community were more involved, beyond just attending the performances, I think it would have a more lasting impact.

Using Screenplays to Integrate Filmwork in the ESL Classroom

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Abstract

Although the use of film in both ESL and EFL classrooms is widespread, the screenplay on which most films are based is almost non-existent as a language learning resource. However, its structured framework provides the opportunity to teach skills-based activities that are contextually clear, particularly when accompanied by the movie. The primary challenge in adopting screenplay work into a curriculum, especially for educators not familiar with the format, is in ensuring specific language-based learning objectives are being met, whilst also encouraging creative freedom amongst the students. To that end, this paper begins with an introduction of what a screenplay is before examining how utilizing a script can transform the traditionally passive activity of watching a movie, into a series of justifiable language tasks. The familiarity with the language used from these comprehension activities then becomes the foundation for an assessable filmmaking task where students write their own screenplay and subsequently shoot it. The final part of this paper provides instructions on how to implement the movie-making segment and marking criteria for grading.

Introduction

Despite streaming platforms providing unprecedented accessibility to media content for today's language teachers, the belief that film and TV serves only as a fringe classroom activity remains prevalent in the ESL community. That this idea has gone largely unchanged since the inception of video cassettes four decades ago is contrary to a significant body of research which

indicates film-related activities offer viable opportunities to improve language proficiency (Chao, 2013; King, 2002; Stempleski & Arcario, 1992). The reluctance to recognise movies as genuine frameworks for learning derives from several concerns including a lack of formalised integration into curriculums (Park & Jung, 2016); implementation issues relating to appropriate selection from the vast array of movies available and excessive preparation in creating a methodologically sound lesson plan (Stoller, 1988); and an overall lack of confidence in justifying time spent watching a movie in class. This last point is perhaps the least researched, yet most pertinent in terms of discouraging educators from showing films to their students. After all, no teacher wants to be labelled lazy and so watching movies has, for the most part, been relegated to a filler activity that students do before vacation or on the final day of class when all the curriculum requirements have been met (Curtis, 2003).

To address these issues, a different approach is needed, one that uses narrative media, not as a single entity to be viewed passively in one sitting, but as a series of selectively chosen clips designed to initiate student output. This, however, is not to say that the process of conventional language learning planning should be discarded; in fact, the opposite is the case. Traditional activities such as vocabulary and comprehension exercises remain an essential component of working with film and TV and forms the scaffolding Brown (2010) refers to when partnering language learning with foreign English-language films. The importance of beginning with language activities is vital, both methodologically and as a platform for bridging into the more complex series of creative tasks that will follow. The form of these tasks is naturally open to any number of choices, but for the purposes of this paper the focus will be on students writing a screenplay and turning that into a short film.

Introducing the screenplay

Perhaps surprisingly given the abundance of academic papers on utilizing film as a learning tool in the ESL classroom (Curtis 2003; Khan, 2015; King, 2002), published research into the use of screenplays as either a supplementary resource or as the basis for stand-alone activities is minimal. Subsequently, there is a reticence to using scripts in the classroom, not least of which is due to instructors being unfamiliar with the formatting. This lack of clarity naturally leads to

difficulties translating screenplay content into workable language tasks. Therefore, a good place to begin is with an overview of what exactly a screenplay is.

What is a screenplay?

A film's screenplay is the foundational document on which every element of the movie is based. This includes not just the dialogue, but the characterisations, the choice of locations, the production design and all other aspects seen on screen. It is written in the present tense and structured in such a way that one page of script generally equates to one minute of screen time. Unlike a novel, which has the capability of communicating a character's thoughts or even a stage-play which verbalises feelings through dialogue and soliloquies, the primary focus of a screenplay is action. This means that inner thoughts and emotions need to be externalised through observable behaviour and decision-making. Dialogue should always be in service of what the characters are doing rather than as a device for exposition.

The importance of the screenplay in cinema cannot be overstated and it could be argued that the script is in fact the most vital piece of the movie-making process (Richards, 2010). If this is indeed the case, its inclusion as a language learning supplementary tool becomes increasingly justifiable for language instructors showing films in the classroom.

What benefits does a screenplay offer for language learners?

At its most basic, a script provides a written account of the dialogue found on film and could certainly be used as a 'listen and repeat' activity, not dissimilar to the conversations found in nearly all ESL textbooks (see Figure 1). However, a screenplay offers considerably more learning opportunities when approached not as a traditional listening and speaking activity, but as a foundation for creative exploration in which language acquisition is organically embedded through context.

Context


One of the major benefits of using a screenplay is that it provides students with a clear context to the learning objectives set out by their teacher. This, perhaps more than any other

aspect, is what separates screenplay dialogue from that found in a textbook and is highlighted in the following two examples:


Figure 1

Textbook Dialogue (from Four Corners 1)

2 Conversation Last night

 Listen and practice.

Mindy Hi, Pete. Did you see Jennifer last night?
Pete Yes, I did. But the day didn't go so well.
Mindy Really? What happened?
Pete Well, I did my laundry yesterday morning, but my favorite white shirt turned pink.
Mindy You're kidding!
Pete Then I got a haircut, but I really didn't like it.
Mindy Oh, yeah? Did you make dinner for Jennifer?
Pete Well, I slept for a while, so I didn't go grocery shopping.
Mindy Oh. Did you eat anything?
Pete Yeah, we did. Jennifer bought a pizza for us.
Mindy Really?



In Figure 1, we see a dialogue instantly recognizable across many language learning textbooks. It is two people talking about the previous day's events with a focus on the past tense. Whilst the conversation provides ample opportunity for students to practice the target grammar form, whether it is enabling the acquisition of practical language skills is questionable. Scepticism over the use of such activities to promote genuine language learning can be found across numerous sources including the work of Krashen. In his book, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Krashen's central hypothesis is that language acquisition does not require an extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, nor does it require tedious drill. He elaborates further by claiming that acquisition is dependent on meaningful engagement with the target language whereby speakers are less concerned with form, and more focussed on the message they are communicating (Krashen, 1982).

If considered through this lens, it becomes clear that the conversation in Figure 1 is ineffective in terms of genuine language acquisition. This, as stated by Krashen, is due to the overriding absence of any message. The students have no idea who Mindy and Pete are, nor the

nature of their relationship. They also do not know who Jennifer is, the subject of the conversation. Immediately this means the purpose of the dialogue is unclear. It is essentially a conversation without intent other than to practice the past tense, which, of course, holds no communicative value and stands in direct contrast to Krashen's claim that natural communication is not concerned with the way utterances are formed.

Figure 2

Harry Potter Screenplay Excerpt

<p>HARRY Sir, why didn't you just tell me about the Deathly Hallows?</p> <p>DUMBLEDORE You will have to forgive me, Harry. You see... I didn't trust you.</p> <p>Harry stares at him. For the first time, Dumbledore looks troubled.</p> <p>DUMBLEDORE I feared that you would make the same mistake I made, that you would be intoxicated by the power the Hallows promise their possessor. But I crave your pardon, Harry. It's clear to me now, as it should have been all along, that you are the better man.</p> <p>HARRY Sir --</p> <p>DUMBLEDORE You are the worthy possessor of the Hallows, Harry, not me. I was fit to own the Elder Wand, because I took it not for gain, but to save others from it. But I took the Stone because I longed to recall someone who has long been at peace and for that I paid with my life.</p>	<p>333 CONTINUED: (4)</p> <p>HARRY You wanted to see Ariana again, didn't you, sir?</p> <p>DUMBLEDORE Yes.</p> <p>Harry ponders this, then frowns.</p> <p>HARRY I used the Stone as well, sir, only a little while ago when I entered the Forest. I saw my mum and dad, and Sirius and Lupin...</p> <p>DUMBLEDORE True. But ask yourself this: were you calling them? Or were they calling you?</p> <p>Harry studies Dumbledore, whose expression remains serene.</p> <p>DUMBLEDORE (looking him in the eye) You are the true master of death, Harry, because the true master does not seek to run away from death. He accepts that he must die, and understands that there are far, far worse things in the living world.</p> <p>For a moment, they stand in silence.</p>
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In Figure 2, this excerpt from Harry Potter's *Deathly Hallows* also features the use of the past tense. However, rather than a conversation with no clear speaker relationship, the dialogue between Harry and Dumbledore carries a very clear message that Harry is the rightful owner of the Deathly Hallows due to his view of death. Even without knowing the full story of Harry Potter, this short exchange is more effective in both teaching the past tense and ensuring genuine learning. This is because an artificial situation such as the one found in Figure 1 has been replaced with context-based dialogue that is recognisable from real life experience (which in the case of the Harry Potter excerpt, despite being a fantasy genre, approaches the issue of death in a very realistic way). As a result, students are motivated to engage with the learning, not only because of its recognizability but also because it has taken on a much greater level of enjoyment through the

power of story (King, 2002). Krashen (1982) adds further support by claiming that storytelling allows the speaker to forget they are using another language and focus more fully on the message they wish to convey. In summary, the combined impact of meaningful conversation and an entertaining context leads to a far greater likelihood of genuine language acquisition.

Language-related Activities

In terms of a practical approach to language learning via screenplays, as previously discussed, the first point of engagement for students should be methodologically sound. This creates both learning objectives and alleviates concerns over the unfamiliar screenplay form that students are probably seeing for the first time.

Figure 3

Vocabulary Matching Activity

VOCABULARY

1. Dungeons & Dragons	a. to argue
2. cul-de-sac	b. a small room
3. Demogorgon	c. a weak person
4. chamber	d. a type of magic
5. deep shit	e. a role-playing board game
6. wimp	f. a street that goes nowhere
7. bickering	g. a powerful 2-headed monster
8. protection spell	h. big trouble

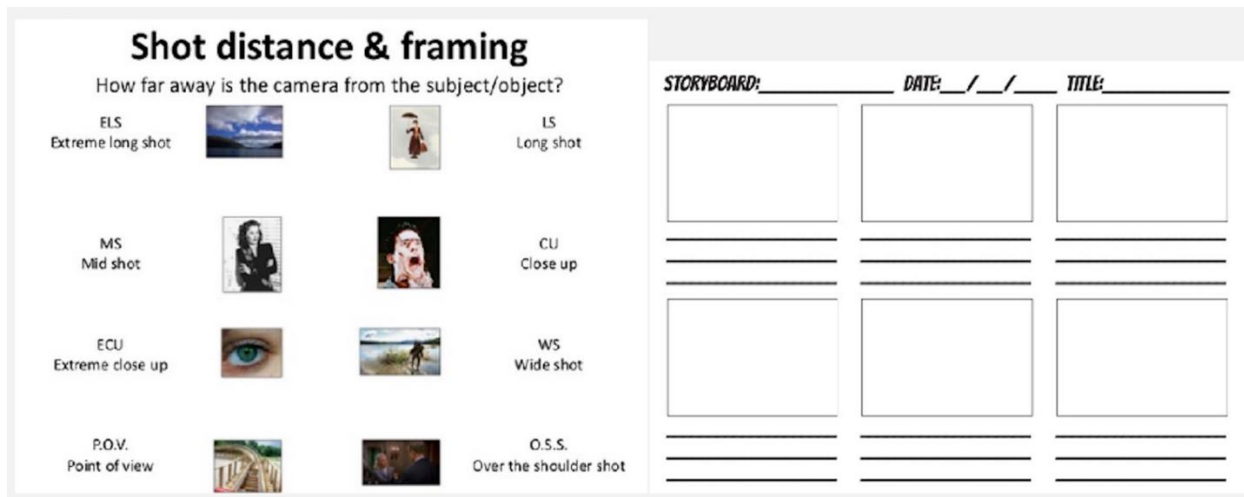
In Figure 3, we have a recognisable matching activity that students almost certainly would have seen before. The language in this example is taken from the first episode of *Stranger Things*, a popular TV series on Netflix and one that many students may have watched. This handout would be distributed once the students had had a chance to read the script and prior to viewing the scene. The students are referencing the screenplay itself as they go through and determine the meaning of the vocabulary (see Appendix A).

In addition, a listening activity can also be done. The teacher can play the audio of the scene and have students find any differences between what they hear and what is in the screenplay. Due to the nature of filmmaking, what was shot may differ to what was written in the script, and having students circle the differences is another language exercise that simultaneously is increasing their familiarity with the content (Appendix A).

Having read the scene, learned the new vocabulary, and completed an audio listening, a powerful bridging activity before beginning the creative component is to have students predict how the scene will look by storyboarding it.

Figure 4

Storyboard Template



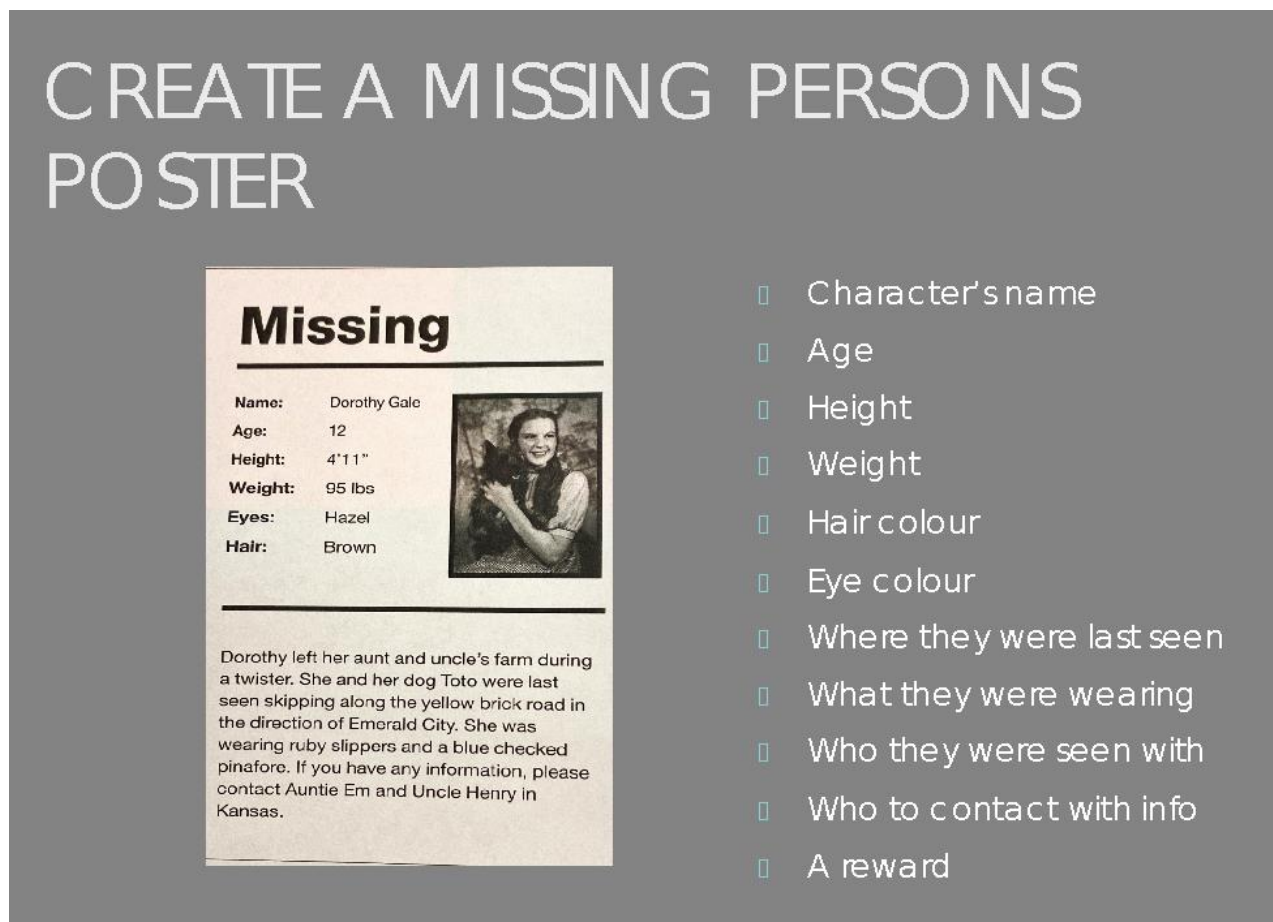
Using the handout from Figure 4 as a reference, students can be introduced to the different types of shots available for filming. Once they know the labels for each framing size, the next step is to have them guess how the scene will be directed by storyboarding it in the empty boxes (see Figure 4). This could be done either in groups or individually but is best undertaken prior to viewing the clip. As a way of guiding the students through the task, it is advisable to first give them an overview of how a scene is assembled. For example, it is common that in the beginning of a scene, the action will be viewed via a wide shot. This allows the audience to orientate themselves to the location and identify who the characters are. As the scene progresses, shots will often be edited to highlight conflict, with a mid-shot perhaps revealing body language and later a close-up

showing the emotions on a character's face. An extreme closeup could be used at the end to emphasize the impact the scene has had. All these framing choices can serve as creative and stylistic tools the students will eventually employ in their own films.

The additional benefit of this activity is it becomes a rich source of discussion after the students have watched the scene. Comparisons between their own versions and what they saw helps them understand that film has its own visual language that extends beyond the words on the page. The process of having students imagine how the scene will play out and drawing it on the accompanying storyboard prior to viewing provides a powerful identification with the screenplay.

Figure 5

Missing Persons Activity



The slide features a large title 'CREATE A MISSING PERSONS POSTER' at the top. Below it is an example of a missing persons poster for Dorothy Gale. The poster includes a photo of Dorothy and a list of physical attributes and other details. To the right of the poster is a list of fields to include in the poster.

Missing	
Name:	Dorothy Gale
Age:	12
Height:	4'11"
Weight:	95 lbs
Eyes:	Hazel
Hair:	Brown

Dorothy left her aunt and uncle's farm during a twister. She and her dog Toto were last seen skipping along the yellow brick road in the direction of Emerald City. She was wearing ruby slippers and a blue checked pinafore. If you have any information, please contact Auntie Em and Uncle Henry in Kansas.

- Character's name
- Age
- Height
- Weight
- Hair colour
- Eye colour
- Where they were last seen
- What they were wearing
- Who they were seen with
- Who to contact with info
- A reward

Finally, once the students have completed these activities and have watched the scene, they can be given a post-viewing exercise to further deepen their awareness of the story. The example shown in Figure 5 is effective due to the nature of its focus. The students are asked to create a missing persons poster for the main character, considering all the physical attributes and

circumstances around their last known location. Whilst this may appear to be only suitable for genres such as crimes or mystery, hypothetical scenarios could be adapted to fit the film. For example, when Harry Potter leaves for Hogwarts, students could be asked to create a missing persons poster for him. This, like the previous work, is not only an effective way of consolidating language, but also adds another element of preparation for the screenplay the students will write themselves.

Filmmaking Project

The lead up work has ideally created a solid foundation for the main project, which is the final stage of the process. This is an important inclusion because without a creative output component, there is no way of assessing the learning that has taken place. The absence of an assessable task may subsequently reduce the incentive for course designers to integrate film work into a curriculum. We will shortly look at possible criteria that could be developed into a rubric, but for now it is important to note that when used in tandem with methodologically sound activities, a filmmaking project can be an effective and justifiable component of a language learning syllabus.

Project considerations

In considering what the project will be, time restraints need to be considered. Whilst having students make their own films is a comprehensive activity, a class schedule may not permit such a major endeavour. An abbreviated version of only writing a short script that takes up one or two lessons may be more suitable. This would still act as a valid form of assessment and could be done on an individual basis. If, however, the objective is for students to use the screenplay as a basis for a film, doing the entire project in groups is recommended. Not only does it mirror the filmmaking process, but it also allows the students to collaboratively use the language they have learned previously.

Irrespective of the final output form, one of the key steps is to provide a point of focus for the students. Without restricting the choices each group has, the task may become overwhelming

and result in substandard story ideas. It is far better to put artificial barriers in place that will provide points of resistance for the students to navigate as they formulate their scripts.

The first, and most logical aspect to restrict is duration. In my classes, I limit the length of each film to between five and ten minutes. As one page of screenplay generally equates to a minute of screen time, this means the scripts can be no longer than ten pages.

Another thing to consider is genre. It makes sense to align the student work with the movie or TV show they have been watching. In the case of my earlier example, “Stranger Things,” there is a horror component. Therefore, I tell the students this must be part of their own films, whether that be a monster character, a mystery within the story, or some other trope that matches the genre.

Depending on the vocabulary and grammar being taught, there may also be a language prerequisite. An obvious example would be incorporating a selection of the words they learned prior to watching the clip. But certainly, other syllabus-based vocabulary or grammar could be mandatory within the writing of the screenplay.

Planning the story

The first stage of any scriptwriting task is deciding on an idea. To facilitate this process, I provide the students with a work booklet that helps guide them toward the story they want to tell. They decide on the title, characters, and storyline by working through the questions in the booklet. An example of how a group completed this is provided in Appendix B.

An important point I like to make before beginning this task, however, is to clearly identify the components of a story. I structure it as a speaking activity within the groups themselves, with them generating elements essential to the story. Some of these include:

- A protagonist – the main character who wants something very specific and measurable
- An antagonist - someone or something in direct opposition to the protagonist who wants the opposite
- A beginning, a middle and an end—at the start we see the protagonist in their ordinary world, followed by an incident which has them confront a series of obstacles (the middle). The end sees the protagonist resolve the disturbance.
- Stakes – the consequences of the protagonist getting (or not getting) what they want

- Rising action – the consequences of failure for the protagonist become more extreme
- A misbelief – the protagonist has an erroneous belief about something in their life and it is only by changing this do they become capable of achieving their objective.

By ensuring students are clear on at least some of these, their films are far more likely to be self-contained stories rather than random skits.

Script format and elements

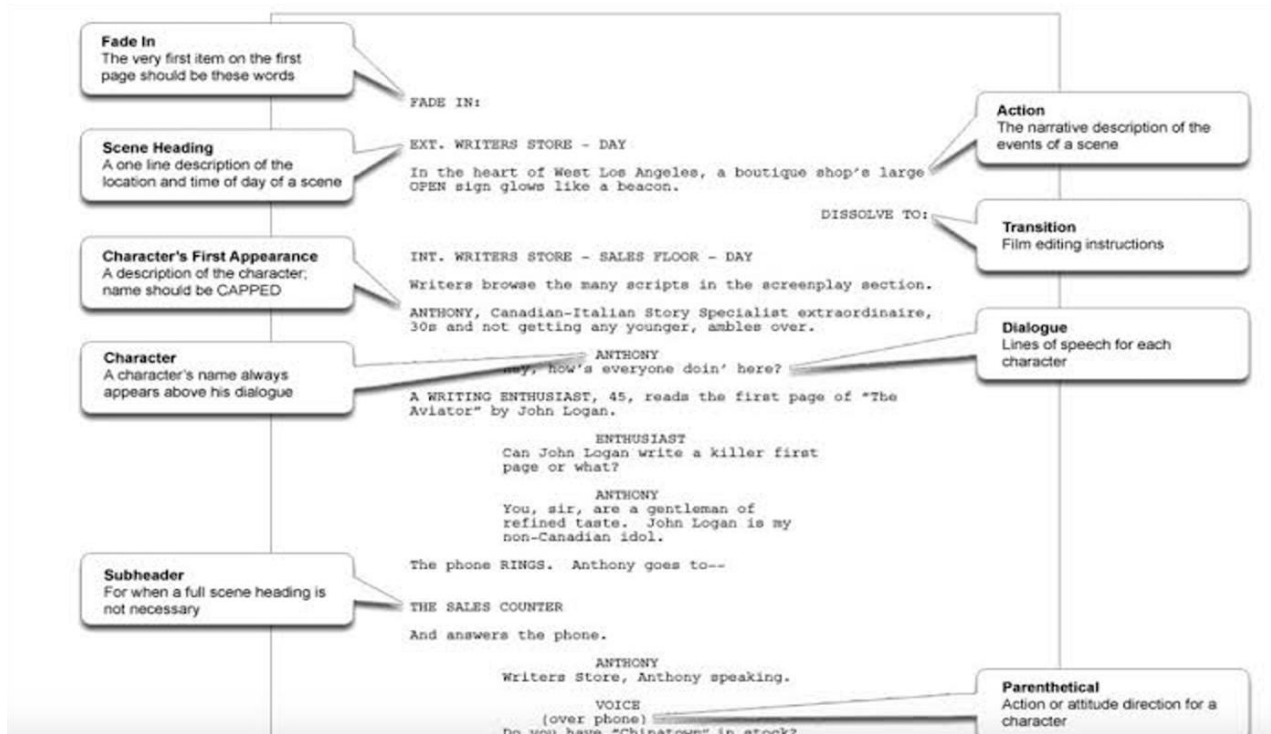
Once the students have a clear concept outlined, it is time to explain the script formatting and elements. Although there are free screenwriting applications that the students could use, I prefer them to write it out manually in Microsoft Word. The formatting instructions I give them are as follows:

- 12-point Courier font size
- 1.5 inch margin on the left of the page
- 1 inch margin on the right of the page
- 1 inch on the of the top and bottom of the page
- Each page should have approximately 55 lines
- The dialogue block starts 2.5 inches from the left side of the page
- Character names must have uppercase letters and be positioned starting 3.7 inches from the left side of the page
- Page numbers are positioned in the top right corner with a 0.5 inch margin from the top of the page. The first page shall not be numbered, and each number is followed by a period.

Obviously, I allow some degree of flexibility here, but it is certainly useful to provide the students with an example script they can reference in terms of both formatting and elements (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Screenplay Elements



We now get to the elements, and I suggest going through this slowly as it is the first time most students will have encountered such a writing style. If we refer to Figure 6, the first element at the top of the page is labelled Fade In. This is unique only to the beginning of the script and will not be found at any other point. The next element is the Scene Heading, also known as a slugline. The slugline indicates the place and time in which a scene occurs and consists of three parts:

1. INT. stands for interior, meaning the scene is taking place inside; or EXT. which stands for exterior and means the scene is outside.
2. Next comes the actual location itself. In the case of Figure 1, we can see it's a writer's store.
3. The time. Usually, it's either DAY or NIGHT but variations such as DAWN, DUSK, and EVENING are also possible.

Following the scene heading, the next element is Action. Action segments are generally used for visual descriptions of what the characters are doing, along with other important pieces of

information to keep the story moving forward. At the beginning of a scene, they also serve as a way of orientating the reader.

In Figure 6, after the first piece of action, there is an element titled Transition. This is essentially an edit point, and you may come across other variations such as Cut To or Fade To Black. However, these transitions have become far less common in modern screenplays and can be disregarded when teaching the form to students.

The next annotation in Figure 6 is Character's First Appearance. Although not a separate element, a standard practice when introducing a character for the first time is to capitalise his or her entire name. Usually, this is followed by a brief description of what the person looks like and any defining character traits.

After this comes Character and Dialogue. When characters are ready to speak, their names are indented and capitalised. Directly below that is dialogue, although sometimes an action or point of direction in parentheses will separate these two elements. Usually, the conversation then alternates between the respective speakers, but important action descriptions can be inserted to further elaborate on what is taking place.

Finally, if a piece of action unfolds at a specific location within the scene, a Subheader can be used. This acts as an abbreviated slugline, highlighting that whilst the action has moved to a different point, it is still part of the overall scene.

Writing the script

Once the students have been taught the formatting and elements, it is time to write the screenplay. Given their initial lack of familiarity with this type of writing, I suggest facilitating the scriptwriting process closely. Ensuring the students are using the correct formatting and elements is one area to monitor but of equal importance is providing story feedback on how to translate the ideas in their plan onto the page. This can be done by asking the students questions such as:

- What does the character want here?
- What is stopping them from going after/getting what they want?
- What action would the character take to mitigate the obstacles in their path?
- What do they want to say?

- How could they say what they want to say without stating it directly?
- What is the most efficient way to write the action using the present tense?

Although I encourage them to be linguistically accurate and offer vocabulary suggestions, my primary focus is on clarity of the story. If they write a piece of dialogue that is not grammatically correct but conveys the meaning, I often will not correct it. As previously discussed in the work of Krashen, the most important thing is the message is clear, and the last thing I want to do is remove creative ownership of the student's work in the name of lexical accuracy.

An example of the opening page of a screenplay adapted from the workbook in Appendix B, can be found in Appendix C. As you can see in the titles, their choice of wording is not perfect, but it conveyed what they wanted to say, and I was happy to leave it as the students wrote it.

Production

The groups are now ready to begin filming. This is usually done on their phones and although they are familiar with the basic workings of their cameras, I still like to spend some time explaining the more advanced features that are available for use.

On both the iPhone and high-end Androids, resolution and frame rate can be manually adjusted. For better picture quality, especially if the students are shooting in low light conditions, I suggest they use the 4K resolution setting. The disadvantage of this is that files will be bigger than had they shot in HD and puts more demand on the editing device in post-production. However, good picture quality is preferable and is worth a marginally slower editing process.

The other camera setting is frame rate, with a selection of 24 frames per second (fps), 30fps or 60fps to choose from. The difference between the first two is that 24fps has a more cinematic feel, whereas 30fps looks more like television or video. The important thing is that students choose one and stay with it. For action sequences, 60fps is useful and captures movement with great clarity. It can be used in conjunction with the primary frame rate the students are shooting in (which is either 24fps or 30fps) as a stylistic variation. The final frame rate setting is slow motion and shoots HD at 120fps. This, when uploaded into editing software, is automatically adjusted to create a slow-motion effect. Again, this can be used with the main frame rate the film is being shot

at. The most important thing to remind students is that when choosing an effect, be it the heightened clarity of a fast frame rate or slow motion, they use it sparingly and in service of the story.

Another point to consider is that of lighting. Obviously, the students will not have the resources for complex lighting equipment, but the one thing I encourage them to employ is contrast. Rather than have light spill all over a character's face, I recommend shooting with some facial features covered in darkness. This creates a more dynamic image and creates story tension. The same principle applies to location and can be achieved by controlling where light comes from. For example, rather than using overhead fluorescent lights, the students could perhaps use light coming in from a window, a readily available lamp, or even the torch on their phone. Anything that makes the visual more interesting will help their story.

The final stage of production that students need to consider is sound quality, which can be more challenging to master than image quality. Eliminating poor audio is best achieved by recording on a separate microphone. If this is unfeasible, the audio recording on the camera can be checked after each take. Should the action or dialog not be clearly captured, another version can be recorded purely to improve sound. Usually, just this recommendation is enough to see a significant improvement in overall audio quality.

Post-Production

Once the groups have finished filming, the next stage is post-production. This includes editing, laying down a soundtrack, and exporting the finished film. In terms of the editing software students should use, I recommend iMovie and give a very short tutorial on its basic functionality. For teachers not familiar with iMovie, there are many YouTube videos on the subject you could show instead. However, should the students want to use a different program, I allow that too. At this point, I am not looking to micromanage the post-production process, but rather be available should they need me. However, in most cases, the groups are usually very autonomous throughout this stage. They have collectively invested a great deal into the creation of their stories and so are highly motivated to do the work and find solutions. The other thing I came to realise is that this generation have grown up with Instagram and Tik-Tok and many of them are very adept at

creating video content with programs I am not familiar with. Thus, I recommend a hands-off approach, offering input only when it is requested.

In terms of exporting the finished film, MP4 format is the most suitable. Every piece of editing software will offer this video formatting option under its export tab, and the students simply need to allow time for the rendering. It is also worth mentioning that the file name should consist of the film title and any other identifying information the teacher would like, as very often students will overlook this step.

Grading and final viewing

Once the films have been exported as MP4 files, the students will upload both the movie file and the screenplay into a shared folder I have created in Google Classroom. After going through the script and movie, I will then allocate a group grade. As can be seen in the grading criteria in Figure 7, I split the scoring into two categories: the writing of the screenplay and the making of the film. For further clarity, I subdivide these into different components including formatting, the story itself, depth of character, and use of language for writing the script, and production, post-production, and collaboration for the filmmaking. The accompanying questions act as guidelines and can be weighted according to teacher preference. For example, in the writing section, I tend to put greater emphasis on the creative aspects of story and character rather than the technical areas of formatting and language. Likewise, I reward a highly collaborative effort even if there are technical deficiencies.

Figure 7

Filmmaking Project Grading Criteria

FILMMAKING PROJECT – GRADING CRITERIA	
Assessment Components	Details
SCREENPLAY - 50%	
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the story planned effectively beforehand? • Is the script formatted correctly? • Have the elements been applied accurately?
Story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the story cohesive? • Is there rising conflict in the action? • Is there a clear and satisfying ending? • Does the script include the pre-requisite genre components?
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the goals of each character clear? • Are there obstacles along the way? • Does the main character undergo change by the end of the story?
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the dialogue engaging? • Are the action elements written clearly and in the present tense? • Are the required language structures present?
FILM - 50%	
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the film use lighting effectively? • Does the film have dynamic camera angles and movement? • Is the sound clear? • How well has the location been used (including props)? • What is the quality of acting?
Post-production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the edit smooth? • Does the edit tell the story clearly? • Are there any special effects? • Is there a music score? • Is there anything particularly creative about how the film has been translated from script to screen?
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did all members of the group contribute? • Were roles clearly defined? • Did the group use English throughout the project? • Did the group surpass expectations?

The final part of the project is a viewing, which I will usually stage as a film festival. If logistically possible, I have other teachers or even supervisors come in as guest judges and

adjudicate on awards such as Best Actor and Actress, Best Screenplay and Best Film. This is always a thoroughly enjoyable experience for the students and is a good opportunity to reward individuals who have excelled throughout the project. In many cases, the students who do well are not necessarily the strongest English speakers and the chance to offer positive reinforcement to those who do not often see it in their grades is one of the truly powerful aspects of this project.

Conclusion

The process outlined in this paper is, of course, open to modification and reinvention. Whilst writing a screenplay that is subsequently made into a movie is the most comprehensive method of integrating language work and film, it is undeniably a time-consuming project that may not be suitable for all classroom environments. However, even vastly abbreviated versions of this may still carry great value for the students and will provide not only enjoyment, but also skills they can adopt into other areas. In my case, I have seen students create short, English-based videos that were then posted on their Instagram and TikTok accounts, highlighting a practical application of what they have learned in the classroom.

Another benefit has been that when we do come across a textbook conversation that is a mandatory part of the curriculum, rather than just read and repeat with no context, students are able to render appropriate meaning through discussion and in some cases, rewriting the dialogue into script format. Again, as a modified activity, these could then be rehearsed and filmed, with students adding post-production effects and uploading it as part of their classwork. The more integrated this process is into how the students approach their work, the more confident and creative they will become at adapting it. With all the technology they need readily available at their fingertips, there is no reason why script-based activities cannot make the use of film a methodologically justifiable component of any language learning environment.

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Walker: Using Screenplays to Integrate Filmwork in the ESL Classroom

Appendix A

STRANGER THINGS #101 10/04/15 (PINK) 2.

3 CONTINUED: 3

WATCH THROUGH THE FLICKERING LIGHTS AS THE SCIENTIST IS SUCKED UP TOWARD THE CEILING BY SOMETHING. HIS LEGS KICK VIOLENTLY IN MID-AIR AND HE SCREAMS IN HORROR AND THEN --

The elevator doors snap shut.

4 EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT 4

HISS! LAWN SPRINKLERS kick on.

We are now in a 1980s SUBURBAN CUL-DE-SAC. Quiet. Calm.

We HEAR THE VOICE OF A YOUNG BOY. Dramatic, intense.

MIKE (V.O.)
Do you hear that? Listen...

We FOCUS on a TWO-STORY HOUSE at the end of the cul-de-sac.

The mailbox reads: "THE WHEELERS."

MIKE (V.O.)
... Something is coming... something hungry for blood...

5 INT. WHEELER HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT 5

A GROUP OF BOYS, 12 years old, play DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS.

They sit around a CARD TABLE. A GRID MAP is spread out on the table before them, along with a nearly empty pizza box, canned Cokes, and the all-important DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS MONSTER MANUAL.

MIKE WHEELER, 12, is the "Dungeon Master" and de facto leader of our group.

MIKE (CONT'D)
... A shadow grows on the wall behind you... swallowing you in darkness... it is almost here...

The other boys lean forward. Riveted. We survey them:

LUCAS SINCLAIR, 12, playing as a knight. He is very small but his loud mouth more than makes up for it.

DUSTIN HENDERSON, 12, playing as a dwarf. He is the most fearful -- and least confident -- of our group.

WILL BYERS, 12, playing as a wizard. He is soft-spoken, gentle, delicate.

(CONTINUED)

STRANGER THINGS #101 10/07/15 (YELLOW) 3.

5 CONTINUED: 5

WILL
... What is it?

DUSTIN
What if it's the Demogorgon? We're in deep shit if it's the Demogorgon --

LUCAS
It's not the Demogorgon --

Mike waits for them to settle down. Then:

MIKE
An army of Troglodytes charge into the chamber!

He slams SIX WINGED MINIATURES onto the map.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Their tails hit the floor. Boom! Boom! Boom!

DUSTIN
Troglodytes?!

LUCAS
Toldja.

DUSTIN
Pfff.

Mike looks over his shoulder. His eyes grow wide.

Wait... do you hear that? Boom! Boom! Boom! That sound... didn't come from the Troglodytes. No. It came from something else...

Mike slams a LARGE TWO-HEADED MONSTER MINIATURE onto the map.

MIKE (CONT'D)
THE DEMOGORGON.

The boys stare.

DUSTIN
We're in deep shit.

MIKE
Will, your action.

(CONTINUED)

JESUS. we're so screwed

one minute

STRANGER THINGS #101 10/07/15 (YELLOW) 4.

5 CONTINUED: (2) 5

Will swallows. God, he wishes it wasn't his turn.

WILL
I -- I don't know --

LUCAS
Fireball him --

WILL
I'd have to roll thirteen or higher --

DUSTIN
Too risky. Cast a protection spell --

LUCAS
Don't be a wimp! Fireball him!

DUSTIN
Protection spell --

MIKE
The Demogorgon is tired of your silly human bickering. It stomps toward you. BOOM!

LUCAS
FIREBALL HIM WILL!

MIKE
Another step. BOOM!

DUSTIN
Cast protection!

MIKE
It roars in anger --

LUCAS
Fireball -- !

DUSTIN
Protection --

MIKE
And --

WILL
FIREBALL!

Will rolls the dice. Too hard. The dice scatters to the other side of the basement. It lands by the basement steps.

LUCAS
What is it?!

WILL
I don't know!

(CONTINUED)

cast

what is it? it got it

STRANGER THINGS #101 10/04/15 (PINK) 5.

5 CONTINUED: (3) 5

DUSTIN
Is it a thirteen?

WILL
I DON'T KNOW!

The boys scramble to look at the dice when --

WHOO! The basement door swings open. The boys look up to find KAREN WHEELER, late 30s, Mike's mom, standing at the top of the stairs.

MIKE
Mom, we're in the middle of a campaign --

KAREN
You mean the end.

She taps her watch.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Fifteen after.

6 INT. WHEELER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 6

Mike chases his mom up out of the basement.

MIKE
Just twenty more minutes --

KAREN
It's a school night, Michael, and I just put Holly to bed. You can finish next weekend --

MIKE
That'll ruin the flow --

KAREN
Michael --

MIKE
I'm serious, Mom! It took two weeks to plan. How was I supposed to know it'd take ten hours -- ?

KAREN
You've been playing ten hours?

Mike's dad, TED, 45, is watching TV. Or trying to. The signal is terrible; a snowstorm of STATIC obscures the image.

He smacks the TV.

(CONTINUED)

what is it? omg omg

Appendix B

About my Film

Name: _____

Remember your movie has to be no more than 2 minutes long.

The title of my film is:
The World Adventure of Momotaro.

My story idea in one sentence is:
A story where Momotaro gathers strong animals from all over the world and goes to defeat an Oni.

My characters are:
 • Momotaro (from Japan)
 • Dog (from Europe)
 • Monkey (from Africa)
 • Bird (from South America)
 • Oni (from Japan, live America)

What are my characters like?
 • Momotaro: Proactive, Polite, Intelligent
 • Dog: Strong, fair is high, Gentle (Pica)
 • Monkey: Positive, Generous, Strong
 • Bird: Easy going, outgoing, talkative

What do they want to do?
They want to defeat an ogre.

What happens to them?
Momotaro meets strong animals from all over the world and cooperates to find an ogre.

Have a Think

Where will I film? Will it be in different places? Is it inside or outside?
day

Is it day or night?
day

I will film in these places:
class room

Costume or make-up needed:
Face (Oni)

Objects needed:
Paper doll

Storyboard

Draw a picture representing your scene. Include the dialogue of your characters.

Scene 3: What happens next?

Camera shot: long shot mid shot close up
Camera angle: low angle high angle point of view

Notes about your scene:
 Hello, I'm Momotaro.
 Hello, I'm bird.
 Did you see the ogre?
 No, but I heard that ogre pain the lettuce, first in America. It is cruel.
 Thank you, go let's go to America, can you go together?
 OK! It looks fun!

Storyboard

Draw a picture representing your scene. Include the dialogue of your characters.

Scene 4: What happens now?
How does it end?

Camera shot: long shot mid shot close up
Camera angle: low angle high angle point of view

Notes about your scene:
 Oh, no! I finally find you!
 What are you talking about?
 You stole the bread, ruined the fields, and ate the wheat!
 No, I'm not doing that. I just ate many hamburger!
 Really?
 Believe me, this is a proof.
 You are telling the truth. I'm sorry.
 Don't worry. Let's eat together! Yes!

Storyboard

Credits: Give thanks to all the people that helped you make the movie

The end.
~ Thank you for watching ~

Notes:

Storyboard

Title Page: Design the page where your title will go.

The world Adventure of Momotaro.

Notes:

Storyboard

Draw a picture representing your scene. Include the dialogue of your characters.

Scene 1: Where does it start?

Camera shot: long shot mid shot close up
Camera angle: low angle high angle point of view

Notes about your scene:
 Hello, I'm Momotaro.
 Hello, I'm dog.
 Did you see the Oni?
 No, but I hear that bread in this town has disappeared. It is cruel.
 Shall we go to defeat Oni together?
 OK. Let's go on my plane.

Storyboard

Draw a picture representing your scene. Include the dialogue of your characters.

Scene 2: What happens next?

Camera shot: long shot mid shot close up
Camera angle: low angle high angle point of view

Notes about your scene:
 Hello, I'm Momotaro.
 Hello, I'm monkey. What's up?
 Did you see the Oni?
 No, but I hear that Oni near off the wheat in this town.
 Thank you. Can you go searching for ogre together?
 OK! Let's find together.

Appendix C

FADE I N:

AUAP FI LMS TI TLE

EXT. JAPAN RI VER - DAY

A old lady sitting at a river.

A peach shaping object comes toward her.

She looks suprised.

ANI MATI ON FX - OLD MAP

TI TLE - In Japan, Born from peach

I NT. JAPAN HOME - DAY

The old lady is with her husband. They open the peach object and see inside is baby.

They looks VERY surprised.

ANI MATI ON FX - OLD MAP

TI TLE - was gentle, polite and intelligent man. The name is Mmotaro

See Mmotaro become man.

ANI MATI ON FX - OLD MAP

TI TLE - He hears rumors of Oni and gather animals from all over the world

MONTAGE:

- EUROPE

- AFRI CA

- SOUTH AMERI CA

ANI MATI ON FX - OLD MAP

TI TLE - Now, they embark on a journey of on Oni defeat

OPENI NG CREDI T:

THE WORLD ADVENTURE OF MOMOTARO

Book Reviews

12 Short Plays for the Language Classroom and Beyond!

[Chris Parham. Intergraphica Press, 2021. Pp. 94. ¥2,000 + tax. ISBN: 978-4-9911991-0-3.]

Zach Strickland

Kyoto Koka Women's University

Introduction

While role-play is a common activity utilized in classrooms for learners of English as a foreign language, it can be challenging to find ways to expand role-playing into more meaningful or emotional situations. *12 Short Plays for the Language Classroom and Beyond!* was designed for teachers who are looking to find ways to bring dramatic scenes into the classroom in a way that can also serve a traditional language class format and course curriculum. This text is best suited for high-school and university students, but the language and themes might also be suitable for higher level junior-high students. The plays, written for intermediate-level English language learners, give students the opportunity to explore a variety of situations.

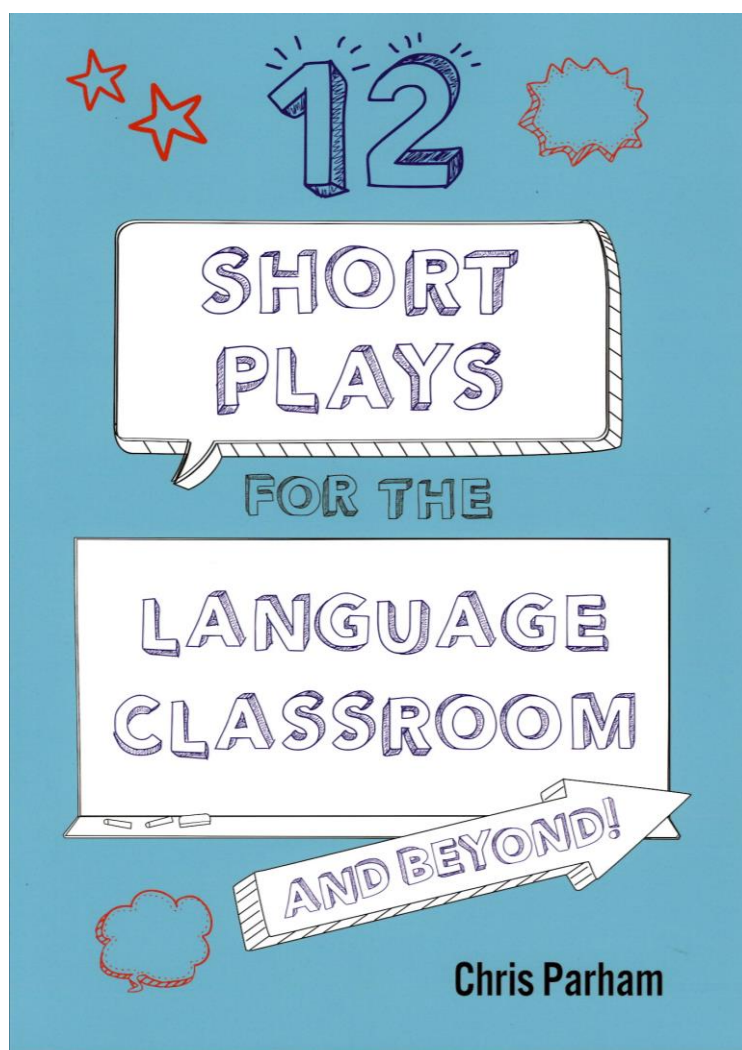
There are not many books available like *12 Short Plays*. Current ELT catalogues in Japan list few textbooks with a dramatic focus, and the ones that are available tend to be aimed at advanced learners. This book seems to be a fun and more accessible alternative.

Description of the Book

This B5-sized, 94-page book consists of 12 short plays. The textbook begins with an author’s introduction followed by 12 units. Each unit has the same layout, beginning with a 3–4-page play followed by a series of language-based extension activities. In the back of the book, you can find an “Approaches to Rehearsal” section with tips for practicing dramatic techniques and presentations. The final page has an answer key for the extension activities. There are no illustrations. Although the book was written and published in Japan, there are no Japanese translations or explanations. The following sections of this review will examine each part of the text in more detail.

Figure 1

Cover of *12 Short Plays for the Language Classroom and Beyond!*



In the introduction, the author describes his background and states that his goal was to write “a collection of short plays for intermediate level language students which could be understood, explored and performed by students in a short space of time.”

Table 1

Contents of *12 Short Plays for the Language Classroom and Beyond!*

Play Title	Situation	Number of Characters	Language Target
The Wedding	Two guests are at a wedding.	2	tag questions
Future Homes	A couple looks at a home with a real-estate agent and a speaking robot.	4	modal verbs, imperatives
The Candidates	A doctor and nurse interview two candidates for employment at a hospital.	4	adjectives, question words
The Headmaster's Office	A headmaster interrogates three students about a prank.	4	spelling, past continuous form
The Flight	A pilot, attendant and two passengers are on a plane.	4	phrasal verbs, preferences
Incognito	A fan discovers a celebrity at a cafe.	2	reported speech

Play Title	Situation	Number of Characters	Language Target
The Buckingham Residence	Five people chat at an upper-class home.	5	prepositions, differences
The Queue	Three people in line are deciding what movie to watch.	4	listing, genres
Stage Directions	A teacher and three students are rehearsing Shakespeare.	4	similes, stage directions
The Great Gourmet Grill Off	Four people are cooking on a live tv show.	4	ingredients, giving instructions
A Tale of Two Umbrellas	A boy and a girl are talking about school and possible romance.	2	dating language, reviewing books
The Top	Two girls are at a shop when a famous, internet influencer arrives.	5	shopping language, millennial slang

The Plays

The plays are written with a language appropriate for high school intermediate-level students of English as a foreign language and would also be suitable in a university setting. The plays present a variety of situations and settings with characters from a wide breadth of backgrounds, jobs and ages (see Table 1). Some of the situations are very friendly and casual, the characters speaking as friends or colleagues. Others are more formal with characters in positions of different social rank, for example, an employer and an employment candidate, or

a wealthy person and their house-staff. This presents opportunities for students to interact with situationally appropriate language. Most of the plays have four speaking characters, while a few of them range from two to five characters. The plays are mostly three to four pages in length. The final play is five pages long. There is some advice in the rehearsal tips in the back of the book with information about how to utilize these plays with a varying number of students.

The Extension Activities

Each unit's extension activities follow the same format: First, there are three typical warm-ups that are thematically related to the play and give students the opportunity to have an easy English conversation as a warm-up. Here is an example from "The Headmaster's Office:"

-What was your favorite subject at school?

-Can you remember a time when you got in trouble at school?

-Who was your scariest teacher?

The questions are simple and can be answered easily by lower-level students but also invite more extensive answers from students who want to challenge themselves to speak more. This is followed by a vocabulary list. Each list consists of 15 words from the story accompanied by two vocabulary tasks. Here is an example:

-Make 5 statements using one or more of the (vocabulary) words in each statement.

-Tell a story about a _____ experience using as many of the words as you can.

The second task is always related to the setting of each unit. These two tasks always follow the same format. These tasks are followed by ten comprehension questions and five true or false statements, all of which can be answered by a careful reading of the contents of the play.

The next two activities reflect the language target of each unit. These activities are generally presented as an explanation of that target language and then a task or tasks to practice it. Here is an example from Unit 1:

Tag Questions

*A tag question is a statement followed by a mini question. There are several tag questions used in this scene, for example, the woman says, 'The bride looked absolutely gorgeous, **didn't she?**' and shortly after that she adds, 'And the flower girl and the little ring boy were so sweet, **weren't they?**' Now try these exercises.*

-Underline the tag questions in the scene.

-Write out three tag questions of your own.

-Ask your partner the tag questions.

Some of these specific activities involve checking the text, others involve dialogue with a partner, and some are more physical and dramatic activities that require getting up and moving around the room. The “Stage Directions” unit introduces technical vocabulary useful for actors’ movement on stage.

The final two tasks are the same for every unit but are situationally specific to the theme of that unit’s play. One task is a role-play section that gives two situations with an opening line of dialogue. Students are expected to improvise these conversations. The second task contains 3 questions for discussion in small groups.

The Approaches to Rehearsal

In the back of the book is the “Approaches to Rehearsal” section. The text suggests some reading exercises with methods for students and teachers to read through the plays. These exercises are designed to give reading opportunities within a larger class, where students take turns reading, without necessarily being assigned characters. There are also methods of reading for pairs or small groups. In addition, there are then questions that offer

students advice on how to gain a deeper understanding of the characters beyond what is written explicitly in the scene. These questions can be answered within a group discussion or as a writing exercise. Finally, there are more tips about stage movement, character physicality, and performance. This section is particularly useful for teachers, providing good ideas for managing the plays and activities in a class.

Evaluation of Textbook

The chosen language is effective and appropriate for teaching high school intermediate or higher-level students of English as a foreign language. Although the plays are written in British English, they are easily accessible to speakers of American English. The situations in these plays are often comical but are occasionally dramatic. The plays effectively present a variety of situations and settings with characters from different backgrounds, jobs, and ages. This diversity of scenes and characters provide many windows into what kinds of English can be used by different kinds of people in a variety of settings. The situations remain grounded enough to provide useful dialogue for learning language that can be used in everyday situations. The situations occasionally touch on romance or conflict but remain tame enough that most students should be able to engage with the scenes comfortably without embarrassment. Teachers should always be thoughtful of their students in that regard.

The goals of this book are to serve as both a traditional textbook and a book of plays for dramatic presentation. As a traditional textbook it succeeds in that goal by being effectively organized into chapters with clear thematic language patterns and exercises that teach them in a variety of different ways. The 12 units could be easily broken down into a one-term course with a focus on the English content of the plays. If a teacher wanted to spend more time with the book, perhaps one class focusing on reading, another on the questions, and third on performance, the book could be utilized over a longer time. The layout of the book allows for a flexibility in utilization within an English course. The consistent length of the plays and content, as well as the set format of extension activities make it ideal for planning. This allows students to become comfortable with the main pattern of the plays and activities while each unit retains new and unique activities to keep things fresh.

As a dramatic collection of plays this text also succeeds in its goals. If a teacher wanted to step out of the more traditional class setting and utilize this textbook in a strictly dramatic format: reading, memorizing, performing, and presenting, these plays would work for that type of class as well. This book would be suitable for experienced teachers of English as a foreign language, whether they have a dramatic background or not, but it might be more challenging to teach for new, inexperienced teachers.

Points for Possible Improvement

The vocabulary lists are useful. A simple dictionary with easy definitions of the vocabulary of each unit could be a nice addition.

The English of each play is noticeably British English. While there is a good variety of characters and settings, perhaps the author might consider using more English varieties as well, perhaps New Zealand English for one play, American English for another.

Many textbooks include CDs or links to audio of the readings. It might be helpful to have dramatic readings the students could access. Although teachers might not want this, as it could interrupt creative interpretation, having the audio available could give the teachers a choice. This could also give teachers a resource for testing listening that is related to the text.

Since the book is targeted to teachers and students in Japan, some Japanese content would be a welcome addition. The author might consider Japanese scene summaries. The “Approaches to Rehearsal” activities would be another section that would benefit from Japanese explanations.

Conclusion

The author has succeeded in his goals. *12 Short Plays for the Language Classroom and Beyond!* is a fun and unique way to bring drama into a course for students of English as a foreign language. The variety of characters and situations keep the book interesting from beginning to end. The activities provide useful opportunities to dig into new vocabulary and language patterns. As a teacher who uses drama in the classroom, I would be happy to utilize

this book myself within my own classes. Although I am not currently teaching a dedicated drama class, I do intend to use a few of the plays from the textbook in my English presentation class. This book is a good choice for teachers of intermediate-level students of English as a foreign language.

Zach Strickland came to Japan 17 years ago and has taught all ages and education levels from infants to seniors. He was a member of the Pirates of the Dotombori bilingual, improv comedy group for 10 of those years and performed across Japan and Asia while also teaching performance workshops. He currently lives with his wife and daughters in Osaka. <st-marcus@mail.koka.ac.jp>



Announcements



Call for Papers: 4th Performance in Education: Research & Practice Conference/Student Showcase/Film Festival

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The call deadline is May 8, 2022.

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Please use this Google Form to apply to present or perform at the event:

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