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Outside the Box: A Multi-Lingual Forum

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Share your experiences, thoughts and opinions on language, teaching, and learning! Where? A good place is right here at *Outside the Box: A Multi-Lingual Forum*. We welcome contributions from both students and teachers, young and old, inside and outside the university community, and—as the title suggests—in the language of your choice. The *Outside the Box Forum* is a publication which pertains to all aspects of language learning, other linguistic topics, your research, your experiences as a language learner or teacher, reviews, tips, procedures, and interesting places in cyberspace or the real world. Given the eclectic nature of our contributions, we strive to preserve the unique voices of the individual authors. Thus, certain contributions may represent versions of English. Ideas, questions, techniques, creative writing—let your imagination and your creativity be your guide to creating a dynamic and polyphonic space about language.

From the Editor

Welcome to another issue of *Outside the Box: A Multi-Lingual Forum*, or, in short, the *OTB Forum*. After a hiatus during the Covid-19 pandemic, we are pleased to again offer a variety of articles on various topics and from various perspectives. *The OTB Forum* focuses on language learning, teaching, and practical applications thereof, but the breadth of the journal is much wider. If you are considering sharing something with us, please check the “Call for manuscripts” above; you will also find the publication’s goals in the column immediately to the left.

In this issue we feature five articles covering a variety of topics. In the first article, **A. R. Woollock** provides a thought-provoking look at how the theories of Basil Bernstein can provide insight into the nuances of Japan, an ostensibly classless society, and its system of tertiary language education. The second article features a re-evaluation of the Japanese writer Haruki Murakami by **Sarara Momokawa**, whose work has been characterized as lacking in ‘nationality’ yet, upon closer examination, reflects his Japanese upbringing. Thereafter, **Jeroen Bode** takes us into the world of *kanji* and the challenges of balancing two different perspectives when rendering and understanding them. In the fourth piece in this section, **Ron Crosby** details a study of the effectiveness of using comic books for primary and early secondary school students in language classrooms. In our fifth article, **Tanya Saga, Naoko Hino, JoAnn Hayashi, and Karen Pullupaxi** provide an insightful look at an innovative collaboration between an NPO for developmentally challenged children and an English conversation school.

As always, we invite you to join us online at

<http://otbforum.net>

As the heat of summer slowly subsides, we would like to wish our readers the very best.

編集者より

Outside the Box: 多言語フォーラム、略してOTBフォーラムの最新号へようこそ。コロナ禍のため一時中断しておりましたが、今号も多種多様なトピック、そして様々な視点からの論文を寄稿いただき嬉しく思っています。OTBフォーラムは言語学習、教育、そして実践応用などに焦点を当てていますが、この雑誌の扱う分野はさらに広範です。もしご寄稿をお考えであれば、上記の “Call for abstracts” をご

覧ください。その左の欄に、この出版物の目的についての記載もございます。

今号は、五本の様々なトピックの論文を掲載しております。最初の論文ではA. R. Woolloock氏がBasil Bernsteinの理論が表向きには無階級社会である日本のニュアンスとその高等言語教育制度について示唆に富む論を展開します。二本目の論文は、日本人著者村上春樹の再評価を試みるSarara Momokawa氏[N1]による論文で、村上氏の作品において「国籍」が欠けているように思われているが、分析してみると彼の日本で生まれ育った影響が見て取れると言っています。その次の論文は、Jeron Bode氏が漢字の世界へといざない、翻訳と理解の二つの視点のバランスをとることに

関する難しさについて論じます。四本目の論文は、Ron Crosby氏による漫画を使った効果的な小学校や中学校の言語教育についてです。五本目の論文は、Tanya Saga, Naoko Hino, JoAnn Hayashi, Karen Pullupaxi氏らが発達障害のある子供たちのNPOと英会話学校の先進的なコラボレーションの取り組みに関する示唆に富む言及をしています。

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夏の暑さも少しずつ和らいできています。読者の皆様のご健闘を祈っております。





Articles



Language Use and Social Class: Re-interpreting Basil Bernstein's Theories of Language in 'classless' Japan, and the Ramifications for Tertiary Education

A. R. Woollock
Daito Bunka University

Abstract: バジル・バーンステインは、英語の社会階級における言語使用が、階級間で異なるだけでなく、階級の内と外を示すなど、多くの基本的な社会的機能も果たすと主張した。バーンステインはまた、そのような言語使用が、特に公教育の構造と内容とに結びついたとき、階級の境界を維持する機能を持つと主張した。バーンステインはさらに、同じ階級内での言語使用は、特定の階級の一員としてのステータスを示すこととなり、その話者の発言権を強めることを示唆した。さらに教育に携わる人にとって興味深いことに、その言語使用は、拙い言葉遣いにより外部から知能が低いと認識された下位労働者階級の話者を意のままに操る機能をも有していた。このバーンステインの理論を、階級のない日本の日本人英語学習者に当てはめると様々なことが理解できる。バーンステインが分析した下位労働者階級の英語の言語使用と、日本のEFL（外国語としての英語）を学ぶ学生のそれとの間には多くの顕著な類似点があるのだ。本稿は、バーンステインの先駆的な論文である *Social Structure, Language and Learning* (1961)を詳しく解釈することで、その類似点を論証し、日本での成人教育の改革の実施に役立つ証拠を提供することを目的とする
キーワード：バジル・バーンステイン, 高等教育, 日本, 社会階級

Basil Bernstein postulated that language use amongst the English social classes not only varied between groups, but that it also performed a number of rudimentary social functions such as indicating in-group/out-group. He also argued that, perhaps, most importantly it helped to maintain class boundaries especially when coupled with the structure and content of state education. Bernstein further suggested that language use within a stratum of class simultaneously empowered the user (by demonstrating their status as a member of a given group), but also, and more interestingly for those working in the field of education, that language use helped subjugate lower-working class users who were perceived by outsiders as being less intelligent (due to

Woollock, A. R. (2023). Language use and social class: Re-interpreting Basil Bernstein's Theories of Language in 'classless' Japan, and the ramifications for tertiary education. *OTB Forum*, 11(1), 7-13.

modes of speech). Interestingly when mapped to Japanese learners in 'classless' Japan, Bernstein's theories are both prophetic and luminary. Sidestepping, for a moment, the focus on social class and instead viewing only his core thesis, one finds that there are many striking similarities between language use amongst Bernstein's lower working class English sample, and Japanese tertiary students undertaking EFL courses. Through a close reading of Bernstein's seminal text Social Structure, Language and Learning (1961). This research aims to demonstrate this assimilation and provide evidence which it is hoped, may be used to implement andragogical reform in Japan.

Keywords: ELT presentations, professional development, Basil Bernstein, higher education, Japan, social classes

In his paper, *Social Structure, Language and Learning* (1961), English philosopher and educational theorist Basil Bernstein¹ (1924-2000) delivered a hypothesis which postulated that language use amongst the English classes differed substantially, and perhaps more damningly, that (despite forming approximately 29% of the population) 'there is little sign that an educational programme has been systematically thought through for the pupil whose origins are lower working class' (1961, p. 163). His England-centric theory was largely drawn from the ideas of social interaction (often parent-child), and employment—how, in post-war England, an array of languages were used across employment sectors, from blue to white-collar, and how these were vehicles (both passive and active) for manifesting and maintaining the class system. Bernstein argued a position which now, thanks to the work of progressive educational theorists like Apple, Freire, Giroux, and McLaren et al., is widely agreed upon (if largely passively observed or ignored), that being, state education, regardless of tier, is a mechanism of social control. In Foucauldian Terms this works not only at the macro level (governmental dictate cascaded through a Ministry of Education), but perhaps more potently at the micro level. It is in this sphere where parents inculcate their children with group/class norms potentially inhibiting class transition or social migration, and peer or in-group pressures apply to maintain class/linguistic boundaries by ensuring any deviations from expected linguistic/behavioural norms are rigorously checked by a variety of mechanisms including ridicule, shaming, humour, and parody.

In the context of Japanese EFL (JEFL) Bernstein's observation appear to be extremely pertinent, and whilst it is not the function of this paper to delve too deeply into the root causes of this apparent assimilation, the author argues that the ideas presented herein possess merit for language/content teachers in Japan who can often face confusion about the apparent inadequacies or deficiencies of their student-learners. Perhaps, by the application of a frame which has closer cultural resonance, it may be possible for the Western educator to transpose at least an emotional understanding to their Japanese students. Furthermore by being able to draw from Bernstein et al.'s considerable body of educational research on the subject, it is hoped that a contribution can be made to educational theory and practice in the Japanese tertiary sector.

Bernstein's Theory of Language: Parallels between English and Japanese Society

Bernstein argued that when language use is examined in regard to the English class system, there is marked difference in use between the working classes and the middle classes. He further argues that communication which occurs between interlocutors in both verbal and non-verbal forms have their own relative complexities and serve differing functions (both social and linguistic). In respect of middle-class learners he observes that the "linguistic relationship is a pressure to verbalise feeling in a relatively individual manner" (1961, p. 167; emphasis added) a function which stands diametric to the lower working class pupil, "who learns a form or language which symbolises the normative arrangements of a local group rather than the individuated experience of each of its members [emphasis added]." As a result of this collective nature, the working-class student's language use largely functions at the level of general or minimal expression where "communication goes forward against a backcloth of closely shared identification [...] which removes the need for elaborate verbal expression"² (p. 166), "where the form of the com-

¹Professor of Education, Institute of Education, University College London.

²Real or not, in Japan there are many phrases which express a sense of shared or mutual understanding based on non-

munication reinforces the pattern of social relationships but fails to induce in the child a need to create speech which uniquely fits his experience” (p. 168). In Japan too, one reason why such use mirrors the English working-class may be due in part to the agrarian past (Japanese: mura-shakai, 村社会, むらしやかい) where people lived in small, close-knit villages bound by family or filial obligations. This past undoubtedly helped form the way in which the Japanese language evolved and is used, that is, with much ambiguity, assumption, indirectness, and a sense of co-constructed meaning. Such use has become the *modus operandi* du jour in Japan, and is a cultural phenomenon which manifests itself in the (tertiary) classroom regardless of subject. In this regard, the Japanese learner shares with the English working-class a similarity of character, and thus, language use. Derived in part from their Protestant upbringing, the English working-class (perhaps like the Japanese) are, for a number of reasons historically renowned for both their stoicism³ and not being overly verbose. This is partly attributable to the fact that historically, in English working-class/industrial cities or regions, it was customary for a limited number of words or short phrases to convey a multitude of meanings depending on context or intonation. Examples of this include phrases such as ‘way aye’ in Tyne and Weir, ‘oh aye’ in Yorkshire, and ‘nice one’ in London. Whilst these examples function as a phrase, they also function as a kind of linguistic ‘marker’ which interlocutors give out to acknowledge understanding during their inactive part of a conversation. Again, this use provides us with similarities in the Japanese language which has a very highly developed system of oral acknowledgments called *aizuchi* (相槌、あいづち), which are sounds used as markers in conversation largely devoid of actual meaning. Extending this, it should be further acknowledged that the Japanese language has a significant number of homonyms e.g. hi (日 - day, Japan 火 - fire, blaze 非 - mistake, fault 灯 - light, lamp) or mi (見 - see, look 三 - three, tri 身 - body, oneself 未 - not yet, un 美 - beauty, beautiful). The point to reinforce here is that perhaps like the English working-class student, the Japanese student too is adept at communicating with a limited linguistic toolbox and is adept at a veritable *discursive ambiguity*.

Mapping Specifics Back to Japan

‘Social Structure and Language Learning’ provided a platform for Bernstein to share some pertinent observations in regard to the use of language by English working-class pupils. He indicates the existence of a number of behavioural and linguistic patterns which show a remarkable parallel to Japanese EFL learners. He notes that, ‘their thinking will be rigid [...] their curiosity is limited [...] they tend to require a very clear-cut educational experience with little ambiguity in direction’ (p. 164). He further notes that ‘they are highly suspicious of anything which does not look like education and they traditionally conceive it’ (p. 165) and that “[working-class] communication reinforces the patterns of social relationships but fails to induce in the child a need to create speech which uniquely fits their experience’ (p. 168). These observations, through derived from the English class system cannot fail to resonate with any educator who has worked within the Japanese tertiary sector, especially those who have attempted to use non linear or multivariate models of andragogy⁴ such as experiential or inquiry-based learning.

Because of the way Japanese learners have been taught thus far in their educational careers, a mixture of rote memorisation (Japanese maru-anki, 丸暗記ま, るあんき), line-by-line translation (Japanese: yaku-doku, 訳読, やくどく), focus on form rather than function (Japanese: kata, 型, かた), and repetitive practice⁵ (Japanese: ren-shuu, 練習, れんしゅう) they have been conditioned to exhibit a tendency towards convergent thinking with a focus on “standardised reactions” (Bernstein, 1961, p. 165) i.e., what should go where and when for a ‘license⁶’ or test⁷, the “means and ends of education” (ibid). The sum of these practices results in what Bernstein (1961: 165) describes as “a general flatness in their over-all edu-

verbal communication derived from being part of a homogeneous group or race (Japanese: tan-itu-min-zoku, 単一民族, たんいつみんぞく), phrases such as ‘to read the air/atmosphere’ (Japanese: ku-ki wo yo-mu, 空気を読む, くうきをよむ) or a kind of telepathic understanding (Japanese: i-shin-den-shin, 以心伝心, いしんでんしん).

³Working-class (Protestant) stoicism manifests itself in the middle-class idea of the ‘stiff upper lip,’ a quintessential characteristic of Englishness amongst the ruling and middle-classes.

⁴Andragogy refers to the teaching of adults, unlike pedagogy which refers to the teaching of children.

⁵When asked, Japanese students will invariably couple the verb ‘practice’ to English rather than other alternatives such as ‘use,’ ‘communicate’ or ‘express’.

⁶It is not unjust to claim that Japan has a deep-rooted fixation with paper qualifications, colloquially referred to as

cational achievements [resulting in being] restricted to concrete operations.” As was noted elsewhere (Woollock, 2019), significant and pervasive levels of cognitive poverty are prevalent amongst the Japanese tertiary study body—regardless of gender or geographical locale, something Bernstein calls ‘cognitive impoverishment’ (1961, p. 166), noting it “affects the length and type of the completed thought” (ibid, 170)

When asked, Japanese students will invariably couple the verb ‘practice’ to English rather than other alternatives such as ‘use,’ ‘communicate’ or ‘express’.

It is not unjust to claim that Japan has a deep-rooted fixation with paper qualifications, colloquially referred to as ‘licenses.’ These qualifications are primarily acquired after studying from a prescribed handbook and sitting regurgitative memory tests. The content and nature of these tests is invariably based upon a given institution, group, or organisation’s mandate, *modus operandi* or corpus of knowledge which they are desirous of transmitting. The motivation for creating the license appears to have less to do with genuine acquisition of knowledge and more to do with compliance and conformity.

Although not specifically within the scope of this research per se, simple examples of this cognitive poverty are evident on a daily basis in the Japanese tertiary classroom and have been observed longitudinally by the author at a wide range of Higher Education (HE) establishments throughout Japan. That is not to infer that students⁸ are ‘stupid,’ they certainly are not, but the parameters of their intelligences are clearly delineated. Thus, a seemingly simple task for Japanese young adults engaged in tertiary education, which involves, e.g., extrapolation, assimilation, synthesis, creativity or abstract correlation can often be difficult to complete or accomplish without numerous examples or an inappropriate level of explanation. Likewise providing complex motivation or rationale for their choices, moral dilemmas, advanced reasoning, and ambiguity proves difficult, if not near impossible on any meaningful level. The Japanese tertiary student like their English working-class counterpart is suffering from poverty in higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), meaning skills which should be prevalent in the tertiary classroom are notably absent⁹. Because of a proclivity towards this linear intelligence, it is often noted that the Japanese have a limited propensity for original idea generation and conception. Conversely, however, they demonstrate a remarkable ability for taking something which is already in existence, deconstructing it and reproducing it at a significantly higher level—electrical goods and vehicles are prime examples of this ability¹⁰. It could be inferred that these competing or multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1987) are reflected in the poor number of wholly Japanese Nobel awards¹¹, and its poor standing in the last Global Creativity Index (2015), yet its high rate of patent application (WPO, 2019). For the tertiary educator this situation should be noted especially when considering materials and methods of delivery.

Explanations for this honing of certain intelligences and absence of others may be likened to the conditioned English working-class student who focuses on the ‘here and now’, the tangible, and the concrete.

probability/frequency of test appearance, and test-taking skills designed to ensure students will be able to successfully navigate the entrance exam and gain entry into a ‘prestigious’ university - none of which has anything to do with the original purpose of education (derived from the Latin *educatus* meaning ‘to bring up,’ ‘rise up’ or ‘nourish’), which is also present in the kan-ji compound for education; Japanese, *kyou-iku* (教育、きょういく). The second kan-ji, *iku* (育、いく) can also be read as *soda-tu* (育つ、そだ・つ) which means to nurture, raise, or bring up.

⁸For those not au fait with Japanese society and education, such a generic statement may seem unwise or unfounded; this is, however, not the case. In Japan all strata of education whether public or private are tightly regulated and controlled by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Every step of the Japanese education process is minutely managed and regulated to the degree that almost every school has a cherry blossom near the gate, will celebrate school festivals on the same date in the same way, and will provide education in very similar buildings of similar colour and design. MEXT regulates Japanese students on behalf of the Japanese government who want to raise compliant workers who will maintain social order and work unquestioningly towards the economic and social stability of the nation state. Education, therefore removes citizens’ ‘edges’ makes them compliant, malleable and cognitively docile. An employee who demonstrates originality, questions or challenges authority is not considered a good employee in Japan.; employees who unquestioningly follow rules are.

⁹In actuality Japanese ‘higher education’ (HE) is more similar in purpose and function to Western standards in ‘further education’ (FE), a tier lower than HE. The distinction being that FE is not bona fide tertiary education per se because its principle focus is not scholastic. It is not primarily concerned with HOTS, nor does it feed academia in the philosophical sense. FE’s main purpose can be described as being to furnish students with skills for future employment being derived from the advent of industrialised societies.

¹⁰The Japanese word *kai-zen* (改善、かいぜん), meaning ‘continual improvement’ aptly describes this ability.

¹¹The Nobel Foundation. (2019): All Nobel Prizes. Retrieved June 19, 2019, from <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/lists/all-nobel-prizes/>

Other reasons may be due to the pedagogies/training students have encountered in Japanese primary and secondary schooling. In addition to this, and of greater concern is that which has previously been noted and critiqued by the author (Woollock, 2020), elsewhere. That being due entirely to prior conditioning at the primary and secondary levels, but actually within the tertiary classroom too, where outdated or inappropriate teaching methods coupled with the ‘performative’ or perfunctory nature of staged discourse in JEFL is a likely contributing factor to this cognitive stultification. In this arena, the overuse of poor quality and impersonal learning materials and textbooks is noticeable. Materials often appear to be focused more on drilling a particular phrase or sentence pattern than they are about eliciting intrinsic and meaningful discourse between interlocutors. In addition to these observations, Bernstein’s theory also draws parallels to the prevailing situation in Japan, whereby English language education, throughout the spectrum of levels, is heavily controlled and administered by non-native speakers. The net result of such control is that students are just not au fait with these non-linear, less regimented cognitive processes or well practiced in using these types of approaches to solve problems. In respect of English working-class students, Bernstein (1961, p. 167) observed something similar when he noted that:

These restricted formal strategies, for the sustained organisation of verbal meaning, are capable of solving a comparatively small number of linguistic problems yet, for this social group they are the *only* means of solving all and every verbal problem requiring a sustained response. [emphasis in original]

Formal and Public Language

Whether due to cognitive poverty, second language use in a monolingual society, or other social factors and attributes, Bernstein’s theory of language as formal or public, offers further insight to the situation in Japan. It is clear that public language (which is associated with the lower-working class) has significant correlation with English use in the Japanese tertiary classroom. Bernstein states that

public language is a form of language use which can be marked off from other forms by the rigidity of its syntax and the restricted use of formal possibilities for verbal organisation. It is a form of relatively condensed speech in which certain *meanings* are restricted and the possibility of elaboration reduced. (1961, p 169; emphasis in original)

He defines the characteristics of public language as having the following attributes: short, grammatically simple, simple and repetitive, little use of subordinate clause, rigid and limited use of adjectives and adverbs, infrequent use of impersonal pronouns, and frequent use of categoric statement. He further argues that

A *public* language focuses upon the inhibiting functions of speech by directing attention (the attention of the observer) towards potential referents which carry no stimulus value for the speaker. In as much as public language induces in the user a sensitivity towards the concrete here and now—towards the direct, immediate, the descriptive.” (p. 172; emphasis in original)

Again, any facilitator who has taught in the Japanese tertiary sector, whether content-focused English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) or language-focused either Content-based Instruction (CBI) or some form of English as a foreign language (EFL) will recognise in the above quotations and associated attributes, striking parallels between the English working-class and the Japanese learner.

In contrast to the parameters and function of the working-class public language, Bernstein posits that its counter, *formal language*, which was used by the middle-classes, includes among its defining characteristics,

logical modification [...] discriminative selection from a range of adjectives and adverbs [...] expressive symbolism [...], and language use which points to the possibilities inerrant in a complex conceptual hierarchy for the organisation of experience.” (p. 170)

What is noteworthy about these qualities is how they map to generic HOTS and also to Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy and Anderson and Krathwohl’s (2001) later revision, both of which pertain to the distribution of skills and cognitive functions which progress from lower to higher as the educand also gains maturity and moves from childhood (pedagogy) to adulthood (andragogy).

The final point to reiterate here is that the English working-class student, like the Japanese tertiary student, is likely not functioning at a higher level of cognition because of training and conditioning, which is

“not necessarily the result of a deficiency in intelligence but comes about as a *consequence* of the social relationship acting through the linguistic medium” (1961, p. 168; emphasis in original). That is to infer that both groups are functioning on a level which allows them to realise the purpose of their interaction/engagement at the most basic level; a kind of ‘no frills’ approach to learning and communication. Bernstein continues, “a *public* language is a vehicle for expressing and receiving concrete, global, descriptive relationships organised within a relatively low level of conceptualisation” (p. 171; emphasis in original).

Discussion

Bernstein’s research interests lay not in the abstract, scholarly or academic functions of language and class, but rather, a deep and profound questioning of the pedagogy and functions thereof, employed in England’s formal education systems (primary, secondary, and tertiary). Furthermore, testing, he believed, helped in part propagate the class distinctions present in England; that in effect education was (and still remains to this day) a method of social control. He observed it was no coincidence that it favours a given section of society (those with the financial resources to procure high value education) and discriminates against another (those without either the financial or social capital to enter into or challenge the dominant system). From a slightly wider perspective of maintaining economic and social stability Bernstein offered an observation which strongly resonates with Japanese society and thus perhaps alludes to other reasons why Japanese tertiary education is systematically configured to produce the results it does, concluding that public language “fosters a form of social relationship which maximises identifications with the aim and principles of a local group rather than the complex differentiated aims of the wider society” (1961, p. 174). If read from the standpoint that ‘local’ means national and ‘wider society’ means global, this statement is telling.

Bernstein’s research found that working-class pupils in England use language for specific, concrete purposes and that their language use has little flair or ‘excess.’ Because the working-class pupil has less need for what one might call ‘excessive’ language their interest in language (and education) tends to be truncated at a point of ‘usefulness.’ He asserted that working-class students were “limited to a form of language use [...] which discourages the speaker from verbally elaborating subjective intent and progressively orients the user to descriptive, rather than abstract concepts” (1960, p. 271). What is startling about these statements is that if we replace ‘working-class’ with ‘Japanese’ and we transpose this observation to the Japanese tertiary EFL classroom, the observations concur. Extending this he hypothesised that whilst middle-class students had access to both formal and public language, working-class pupils were limited to access and discourse through public language, he notes that “middle-class children will have access to both forms which will be used according to the social context” (1961, p. 170). What is of interest in this observation, is that if we again switch frames of reference and replace middle-class with ‘native speaker of English’ and working-class with Japanese EFL student, the argument still holds. Through longitudinal observations in the field it has been noted by the author that Japanese EFL students like working-class native speakers are generally limited in their language use to the kinds of functions noted earlier. Whilst some reasons for this have been discussed in the previous sections, it is not within the specific scope of this paper to deconstruct this phenomenon further. It is recommended that this be addressed by those who can move this beyond the observational to something which can be tested.

Conclusion

Whilst the argument presented here is a re-interpretation of Bernstein’s theory and thus largely subjective in nature (as all theories inherently are), when applied in this way it can be demonstrated to be equally as relevant to apparently ‘classless’ Japan, as it does to a heavily class-orientated society like England. What is of interest here, however, is not the notion of specific language trends amongst different classes per se, rather it is the extrapolated re-application of the theory in a different time (contemporary society) and space (Japan). That Bernstein’s theory could map so well onto an entirely different culture in a new millennium not only serves to demonstrate the prophetic nature of Bernstein’s work, but also points us towards a need to reconsider the theories which govern and dominate our academic disciplines; how, in the post-postmodern epoch we should be more open to working across academic disciplines in order to find holistic and multiplicitous answers to a range of increasingly complex questions and problems. Furthermore, if modes and methods of learner engagement, intrinsic motivation, and pragmatics aimed at developing both the cognitive potential and linguistic functions of English working-class students could be systematically applied to the Japanese (tertiary) educand, then we may yet see advancement in their lan-

guage use and cognitive power. Of course, such an idea remains arbitrary unless, as in the case of English educational reform from the 1960¹² and social reform during the 1980s¹³ there is a genuine desire to increase the social capital of the working-class. To instigate such reform indicates that the government (any government) not only wishes to build a more cognizant citizenry, but, by default, a more critical one too—something most governments would shy away from.

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¹²Desirous of dismantling the English class system, the English government under Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson embarked on a series of educational reforms to that aim, notably the Circular 10/65 issued in 1965 and the Education Act of 1976. These mandates eliminated grammar schools (usually attended by middle-class students) and replaced them with more inclusive secondary modern, or comprehensive schools thus largely eradicated the two-tier state education system and with it the cornerstone of class discrimination in England.

¹³In the 1980s, English Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher invoked a series of social reforms aimed at creating a more classless and egalitarian society. Her measures such as Council House sales, and the privatisation of former State assets and utilities meant that for the first time in English history, working class people not only could afford to buy their own home, but were given access to financial markets previously the domain of the middle-class.

Haruki Murakami: The Cosmopolitan Japanese Writer

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Abstract: *This paper argues that despite the mukokuseki-like (nationality-less) characteristic of the Japanese novelist, Murakami Haruki, that he is not as cosmopolitan a writer as he may first appear to be. Rather, Murakami's Japanese roots can be observed through his fictional characters who display a curious detachment to their society, as well as a lack of distinct societal morals.*

Keywords: Murakami Haruki, translation, postmodern, societal differences

For better or for worse, globalization has made the world become a smaller place. People from different backgrounds can potentially communicate, work with, and perhaps even understand each other. Yet, at the same time, the differences between people have become even more pronounced, especially in the present age when they can be compared in close vicinity to each other.

Murakami Haruki is an intriguing figure because his writings have been described as that of a cosmopolitan writer whose stories are not distinctly Japanese as such. Yet I argue that Murakami Haruki's Japanese roots make the core of his stories. This is done through the analysis of Murakami's representative works as a way of illustrating how he differs from non-Japanese writers, despite his international success.

Murakami's works have been translated into fifty languages (Karashima, 2020). One could safely assume this to mean that his works must contain elements that resonate with diverse readers. For instance, Fuji believes that Murakami's works are read by the young, middle-class Chinese readers, because his stories represent for them their feeling of voidness after the failed democratization movement, as well as to provide a "manual" for how to live in the mass-consumer society (Shibata et al.,



2016, pp. 243-244). A Korean translator of his works mentions that Murakami explores how to live in a capitalistic society without escaping reality, and manage to maintain a cool distance from the society (Shibata et al., 2016, p. 74). Corrine Atlan, a French translator of Murakami's works, has written that the nature of Murakami's works was already global, before there was even the idea of globalization (Atlan, 2015). These views show

that Murakami is a cosmopolitan writer whose novels have crossed over the Japanese linguistic borders to readers with different mother tongues.

Murakami's writing style has also been described as *mukokuseki* ("nationality-less"; Strecher, 2014), which may play a part in his international success. According to Murakami, his basic writing approach is to write something deep by using words that are as simple as possible (Murakami & Shibata, 2000, p. 201), which would also then make his works translatable. Murakami himself appears flexible with his translations, for when Jay Rubin (one of his American translators) asked Murakami whether he should use the first- or the third person in one of Murakami's texts, Murakami replied, "Please do what you think would be appropriate" [適当にやって下さい。] (Rubin & Kuroyanagi, 2006, p. 66). Such an exchange could have led Rubin to say, "When you read Haruki Murakami, you're reading me, at least ninety-five per cent of the time" (Kelts, 2013). In addition, Rubin (2016) believes that to convey the

Momokawa, S. (2023). Haruki Murakami: The cosmopolitan Japanese writer. *OTB Forum*, 11(1), 14-21.

works' mood or their image, a translator must not only be an interpreter, but an inventor (pp. 59-60). The question then arises; can the translated work still be considered the same as its original? A notable example of Jay Rubin's translation is *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* (1997). At the time of its publication, Murakami's readership was predominantly Japanese. Vintage, the book's publisher, asked Rubin to make an abridged version because they believed that a three-book volume would not sell well in the American market. This is the reason why Rubin reordered and cut out a few chapters to make the book marketable and cohesive (Karashima, 2020, p. 221). Despite Rubin's effort, however, the abridged translated version did not prevent Michiko Kakutani from describing it as "a fragmentary and chaotic book" and a story that "simply mirror[s] the confusions of the world" (Kakutani, 2017). However, Murakami's stance in allowing his translators (great) flexibility in their interpretations (and inventions) have also contributed to making him an international writer. Furthermore, in an interview with Kawakami, Murakami explained his thoughts on sentences:

I think that sentences are no more than a tool, so I am very interested in just how effectively I can use it ... the words themselves that are used are simply a tool. It is just a tool that can be used by anyone and is common to all nations. (448; author's translation)

Murakami's view that words and sentences are just a tool has earned him some criticism. In particular, they concern the indirect translations of his works. For instance, Hijiya-Kirschenereit described them as a "globalization" of his own works (founded on American taste) and expressed surprise at Murakami for allowing them as someone who is a translator himself (quoted in Rubin, 2002, p. 411). Siegrid Loeffler, a well-known German literature critic, also criticized Murakami's *Kokkyo no Minami, Taiyo no Nishi* (1992) ("South of the Border, West of the Sun"), as "fast-food literature" in a well-known German TV show Literarisches Quartett [Literature Quartet]. Notable is that Loeffler's criticism was in response to Murakami's indirect

translation, although whether she would have responded more favorably to a direct translation remains unknown. In any case, no Japanese-to-German translation was available at that time. However, given Murakami's words-as-nothing-than-a-tool stance, it does not come as a surprise that Murakami permits publications of his works' indirect translations. According to Murakami, even if there are subtle and minor mistranslations, he does not mind as long as the story is told, because as long as there is power in his work, small mistranslations can be overcome (Murakami & Shibata, 2000, p. 413). In addition, Murakami's stance also explains his use of the word "idea" in his novel *Killing Commendatore* (2017). Readers will be led astray if they try to understand Commendatore, who claims himself to be an "idea", as Plato's concept of ἰδέα . In an interview with Kawakami, Murakami explains that "I just named it as the 'idea', and it is unrelated to the real idea or Plato's ἰδέα . I just borrowed the word 'idea.' I liked the sound of the word. The Commendatore simply introduced himself as 'I am an idea.' Whether he is the real idea or not, no one knows such a thing" (Murakami & Kawakami, 2019, p. 194; author's translation). To Kawakami's great astonishment, Murakami also mentions that he was unfamiliar with Plato's concept of ἰδέα , so that there really is no connection between the two. It is possible that Murakami was pulling Kawakami's leg, but it still shows that Murakami is a storyteller and does not (seem to) show concern for how each individual word is used.

Readers may forget, since Murakami's books seem almost to be *mukokuseki*, that he was born and raised in Japan. His novels cannot, whether he wills it or not, be unrelated to his Japanese linguistic and cultural background. Then why do Murakami's works enjoy such popularity on an international level? Perhaps globalization has brought Japan closer to the West than ever before, in which case Murakami's cultural background itself may be similar to that of his Western readers. This could be why his works have found such an internationally receptive audience.

However, I argue that the postmodern-like appearance of the Japanese society does not re-

seem that of the West, because the foundations of the respective societies differ on a fundamental level (Suter, 2011; Takagi, 2006). The confusion is already inherent in the use of the word “postmodern,” for there is no one commonly accepted definition of this word (Suter, 2011). It is also problematic to apply such words as “modern” or “postmodern” to non-occidental societies because these words originated in the West and are used for the convenience of trying to understand non-Western societies from a Western perspective (Suter, 2011). A brief overview of the Japanese societal structure’s history will illuminate the societies’ differences. Around the second century A.D., people inhabiting the Japanese islands lived in small societal units. These were held together by their common mythical beliefs in nature’s wonders. Around the fifth century A.D., the Japanese imported Buddhism from China. By the sixth century A.D., the societies on the Japanese islands lived by their beliefs in a mixture of myths, Buddhism and *ritsuryo-sei* (a legal system imported from ancient China). During the Edo period, the society took on a combination of the mythic culture and the semifeudal system. The modern period (from the 19th century to the end of the Meiji period) saw a mix of the mythical culture and an electoral system similar to that of the West. The continual difference between the Japanese and the Western society is that in Japan, the emperor has continued to exist as a symbol of a living god. This brief overview shows that the Japanese modern period cannot be compared on the same level as that of the West, because the evolution of the societal formation of these two different cultures differs in their history that span at least two thousand years, if not more.

Consequently, the equivalent of the Western postmodern society never materialized in Japan, because the fundamental components of the society have never been the same. The present-day Japan may appear to resemble the West, but it is only outwardly so.¹

In the following section, I will discuss two of Murakami’s characteristics which partially contribute to his literary characteristics. These two are (a) his treatment of the relationships between individuals and the curious detachment they show from their society, and (b) the sense of societal morals that Murakami’s characters possess.

Every individual bears some trace of his societal environmental influence, which contributes to his identity formation. However, characters in Murakami’s novels usually possess a curiously cool and detached outlook on their society. They seem to not live in it, but on somewhere along its periphery. The Chinese translator of Murakami’s works has described his novels as “an ode to the self” and “hymns of the individual” (Shibata et al., 2006, 303). Similarly, but with a negative twist, the *New York Times* reviewer described his main characters as the *hikikomori* of the Japanese society (Kunzru, 2018). Murakami’s characters are not tied down to their living environment. For example, how the Kano sisters in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* (1994) make their living is unclear. They take off on a whim to Crete or Malta in search of “good” water, suggesting they have no societal commitments to any one place. In Murakami’s novels, most of the characters seem aloof from their respective societies and manage, one way or another, to have as little to do with society at large as possible. Or rather, it may be that their detachment is a manifestation of their inner desperation to avoid their society as much as they can. To a certain extent, Murakami’s protagonists succeed in their detachment, while other characters, who either commit suicide or disappear into thin air, fail to bear the reality. Then, what is this reality that they cannot cope with? It is not reality in the sense of real-life problems, such as poverty or discrimination, but of life itself; the evanescence and the impermanence of it. Some of Murakami’s characters who succumb to life’s impermanence are Rat from the Rat Trilogy (*Hear the Wind Sing*, 1979; *Pinball*, 1973; and *A Wild Sheep*

¹ To give one example, people from Murakami’s generation became adults during the end of the 1960s. At this time, the first must-read Bildungsroman for the young Japanese people was the *Jiro-Monogatari* by Kojin Shimamura. According to this novel, the types of morals that one should possess were 1. Bushido, 2. Loyalty, 3. Filial piety, 4. Compassion. When taking this into consideration, it is clear that Japan differs greatly in comparison to today’s Western society with its underlying foundation of Christianity.

Chase, 1982), Gotanda, the actor, from *Dance Dance Dance* (1988), Naoko from *The Norwegian Wood* (1987), Miss Saeki from *Kafka on the Shore* (2002) and most recently, Kimi (you) from *Machi to, sono futashika na kabe* (2023). These characters are, in essence, the protagonists' double, for they reveal what the protagonists so desperately struggle to conceal deep within their unconscious (Momokawa, 2004).

IQ84 (2009) is an interesting novel because readers may identify Sakigake, a mysterious cult group, as Murakami's representation of Aum Shinrikyo and thus assume that Murakami is uncharacteristically dealing with society itself in his fictional work. However, society and its relation to Sakigake remain unclear, because Murakami's theme in this novel (along with his others) is not to describe their impact on the society. Sakigake exists as a tool in Murakami's narrative construction. Sakigake is not a group planning a terrorist attack like Aum Shinrikyo. In fact, the group has little connection to the rest of the world.²

The second of Murakami's literary characteristics is Murakami's treatment of societal morals, or how a society comes to determine what is good and evil. Through his characters, Murakami portrays evil through individual's characteristics. This relates back to the first of Murakami's literary characteristics (his characters detachment from their society), because the characters' evil remains within those individuals and generally do not become a societal evil to be examined. Also, his characters who show obvious traits of evil are still either underdeveloped or ambivalent in their evilness. In Murakami's works, irrefutable and absolute evil, like Voldemort from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books or Stephen King's *It*, do not exist. This is because for the general Japanese, evil may be determined by context. As the Buddhist phrase 善悪不二 (*zenakufuni*: good and evil

are two sides of the same coin) shows, absolute good, like absolute evil, does not exist within this concept. The Japanese society, which is arguably non-religious in nature (by religious, I mean in the Western sense of the belief in the almighty God), and the Absolutes are nonexistent. However international and *mukokuseki* a writer Murakami may seem, this trait is decidedly Japanese, and I believe it is reflected in his works.

In the following paragraphs, I will examine some of Murakami's works in order to analyze the ambiguity of his evil characters. Let us begin with one of the major characters from *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*. Noboru Wataya, a promising young politician, is an example of banal evil who, in his past, defiled his own sisters (one of whom is the protagonist's wife) as well as Creta Kano. It is as though Murakami tried to develop Noboru into an undeniable character of evil, yet fell short of it. The protagonist, Toru Okada, readily admits his hate for Noboru, although exactly what it is about Noboru that he hates, he cannot pin down. In one conversation with Malta Kano, Toru says:

Every time I talk to that guy, I get this incredibly empty feeling inside. Every single object in the room begins to look as if it has no substance to it. Everything appears hollow. Exactly why this should be, I could never explain to you with any precision. Because of this feeling, I end up saying and doing things that are simply not me. And I feel terrible about it afterward. If I could manage never to see him again, nothing would make me happier." (Murakami & Rubin, 1998, p. 204)

However, Toru seems drawn to Noboru precisely for a part of his character that resonates with Toru himself, which he deeply resents. In Rubin's translation, two substantial parts from the Japanese original are omitted, and these are the

² Some scholars associate Sakigake with Aum Shinrikyo (i.e., Suter), but the group's model may be closer to that of Koufuku-kai Yamagishi-kai (known as Yamagishi-kai) founded in 1953. The ideology of Yamagishi-kai is to build a society in which every person is happy. It aims to be a utopian communal living group whose members grow vegetables and do livestock farming, just as Sakigake does in *IQ84* (Yamagishism). It may be that Murakami's non-fiction work, *Underground* (1997), which dealt with Aum Shinrikyo, has led some of his Western readers to associate Aum Shinrikyo as the model of the Sakigake. Another factor may be that while Aum Shinrikyo's sarin subway attack in 1995 made headlines around the world, Yamagishi-kai is not classified as a terrorist group and may be less familiar for the non-Japanese readers.

ones that involve a lengthy treatment of Noboru. The first one is an online conversation between Toru and Noboru. In this conversation, Toru declares that he knows what Noboru has done to his wife's sister and the secret underneath Noboru's masked self. The second omission is Toru's last conversation with Ushikawa, a man described as "one of the ugliest human beings I [Toru] had ever encountered" (p. 427; author's translation). Ushikawa says to Toru, "Deep down, Mr. Wataya and I are similar to each other....when one takes off a layer of one's skin, we are all about the same" (p. 431; author's translation). It is in this conversation that Noboru's half-baked evilness is revealed. Murakami may initially have tried to develop Noboru as a character in possession of absolute evil, but Ushikawa's description of Noboru boils down the novel's plot into a familiar narrative; the good guy (Toru) rescues the woman (Toru's wife) from the bad guy (Noboru).

In an interview with the writer, Mieko Kawakami, Murakami states that he did not consciously intend to write about evil when working on *Kafka on the Shore* (2002) and *After Dark* (2004) (105). Murakami goes on to explain that his portrayal of "evil" is "a nation, society, or organization that has a solid system that cannot help but bring about and extract 'evil'...I would like to portray how such things are, but if I do so, it would inevitably become a political message, and that is something I would like to avoid, if possible. That is not what I am hoping to convey" (Murakami & Kawakami, 2019, p. 407; author's translation). Yet, is it really realistic for a writer to avoid being political, even in his works of fiction? It is likely that by "political", Murakami means "a political system", such as capitalism, communism, or oligarchy. All humans live within and is restricted by some kind of a system. A novel's theme does not need to be about a political system, but a story devoid of it seems impossible. Murakami's desire to avoid a clear portrayal of "evil" may be the reason for his ambiguously evil characters.

Johnnie Walker, another character from Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*, is a man who cuts out

cats' hearts and eats them raw. At first, he appears unquestionably evil, for he slays innocent cats for no apparent reason other than to make a "magic flute" out of their souls, whatever that may mean. However, readers find that Johnnie Walker may or may not have existed. It appears likely that he did, because the news that Kafka Tamura's father, Koichi Tamura, is found murdered in his house suggests that Koichi Tamura is Johnnie Walker, perhaps in the form of his alter ego. In Murakami's novels, both reality and fantasy blend into each other. Readers can never be sure what Murakami had in mind. It may even be that Murakami welcomes his novels to multiple interpretations.

1Q84 is yet another novel open to multiple interpretations along with inexplicable characters. For example, there is no clear description of who the Little People are, nor of the role the "Air Chrysalis" serves. Sakigake's leader is initially described as an evil character who defiles the Sakigake commune's girls. Aomame, one of the protagonists, is commissioned to kill him for his evil acts. Yet, when Aomame prepares to insert the needle into his neck (at the precise pressure point where it would stop his breathing), the leader tells Aomame that it is the Little People who made him rape the girls and that they used him as a leader of the group. The leader then asks Aomame to kill him, because his entire body is in great pain, and he can no longer bear to live with it. Does this mean that the Little People are the evil ones, and the leader simply their puppet? The *New York Times* reviewer Janet Maslin has criticized the novel for the novel's "unanswered questions" and its "loose ends", going so far as to warn the readers that if they have the "spare time" to "wade through nearly 1,000 uneventful pages, then go ahead and read the novel" (2011). It is likely, however, that Murakami is aware of the readers' possible frustration. In an interview with Kawakami, he said, "Don't you think it is useless to write something that the head can interpret? A story becomes a story because one can't interpret it. If the writer unpackages it each time by saying this has this kind of meaning, that is not interesting at all" (p. 145; author's translation). Then, with Mu-

rakami's permission, I would venture to interpret that the "Air Chrysalis" is a metaphor of *daijyosai*, which is a highly secretive rite performed at the emperor's enthronement. On this occasion, the emperor is said to clothe himself in a *matoko-ofusuma* and enter the *shinza* (seat of god) in order to envelope himself with the spirit of rice. This is how he supposedly becomes at one with *Amaterasu-Omikami* (the goddess of the sun). However, because the exact procedures of the rite remain a carefully guarded secret, the *shinzashigisetsu* ("seat of god secret ritual theory") remains a scholarly speculation (*Daikawarikou Daijyosai Misshitsu de Annei to Houjyo-Inori*). Based on this imperial ritual, my interpretation is that Sakigake's leader is the symbolic emperor (Uchida, 2012) and the Little People are the spirits of rice. This interpretation (and as Murakami says, there is no one correct interpretation) leads me to conclude that the leader is not the figure of absolute evil. The same goes for the Little People, for as Maslin points out, all they ever say is "Ho, ho" (2011). The readers are given too little information to pronounce any judgment on them.

A relatively recent novel by Murakami is *Killing Commendatore* (2017). Similar to his other novels, there is no definite evil in this novel, although there is a stronger sense of *zenakufuni* in it than in his other ones.³ For example, Menshiki appears to be a good character, but his background is unclear (Menshiki made his past irretraceable). Also, when Marie Akigawa hides in Menshiki's wardrobe, she senses something "evil" stand in front of the wardrobe's door; something that physically could be no one but Menshiki. There is also the "Man with the white Subaru Forester", whose portrait the main character *watashi* ("I") tries to paint but is unable to complete it. Both Menshiki and the "Man with the white Subaru Forester" remain ambiguous in nature, but Tomohiko Amada, the painter, is possibly the most mysterious figure of all. Puzzling,

for example, is his painting, *Killing Commendatore*, which depicts Don Giovanni killing the Commendatore, while the Commendatore's wife, Anna, looks on in horror. One possible interpretation is that the evil Don Giovanni kills an innocent father who is trying to protect his daughter. Then, readers learn that Amada, who was studying in Vienna at the outbreak of World War II, had been involved in an assassination plot of a high-ranking SS official. This leads one to speculate, once more, that Amada is relieved to see the Commendatore (the one who claimed to be an "idea") killed (by *watashi*, the protagonist) before his own death, because this fulfills, metaphorically-speaking, the assassination he failed to carry out when he was in Vienna (Asari, 2018). The other more probable interpretation is that Amada, who portrayed himself as Don Giovanni (the evil one), is relieved to know that he too would go to hell (like Don Giovanni), because he could at last atone for his "sin" of leaving behind his lover and comrades back in Austria while he alone fled back to Japan, where he would be safe.

I began by questioning how it is that Murakami enjoys such diverse readership. It is likely that there is no single answer to this question. It may be that translators, as cultural interpreters of Murakami's works, have "invented" them in their respective languages. However, as *mukokuseki* as his works may seem, I have tried to illuminate two themes—an individual and his relationship to society, and societal morals that define what good and evil are—as indicators that illustrate Murakami, well-known as a cosmopolitan writer, as a distinctly Japanese writer, whose stories deceptively appear "Western" and even universal.

Perhaps that is Murakami's intention. His stories can be read by many different people, precisely because Murakami makes sure to leave them open to multiple interpretations. This may be the secret to his international success.

³ It appears that Murakami is reverting back to the traditional Japanese way of thinking. Particularly notable is the influence of popularized Buddhism. There are at least three indicators of this influence: (a) In the prologue, the appearance of a man without a face asks the main character to draw his portrait. Murakami may have gotten the hint from Zen's 公案 *koan*, (b) 善惡不二 *zenakufuni*, and (c) 無常觀 *mujōkan*, that the world is only an illusion.

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Calligraphic Reading, and the Misadventures Therein: *Preface to the Lanting Gathering* [J. Rantei-jō] by Ōgishi (Wang Xizhi)

Jeroen Bode
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Abstract: *The correct rendering and reading of Sinographs (i.e., kanji) has long been a challenging area, as is apparent in the winding road of the two graphs 快 (ō) and 快 (kai), which are quite similar in form yet markedly different in meaning. The calligrapher and the reader can approach this issue in two disparate ways, namely, by understanding the graph in context versus approaching it simply as an artistic presentation. Using the Preface to the Lanting Gathering by Wan Xizhi, these two perspectives are explicated in detail.*

Author's note: Since the reference materials are in Japanese, the names of Chinese historical persons and location are given in the Japanese style, unless the Chinese is known.

Introduction

In this article I would like to address the topic of reading kanji and at times the misadventures that occur therein. The reasons behind that can be insufficient attention span or reading something else than is actually there perhaps as the mind is hindering the correct input by the eyes. Perhaps there are other reasons involved in the complicated act of reading (not at all an easy skill as such).

The last 16 years I have been doing Japanese calligraphy as a member of the Shoyukai organization. At present with an *ex ante* 4th Dan the source material for me is not restricted to only basic texts to study *kaisho* (楷書, standard style), *gyōsho* (行書, cursive style) and *sōsho* (草書, very cursive style). An important criterion for selecting appropriate material for long calligraphy works (cf. fig. 7) is (my) technical skill or lack thereof. Normally, the calligraphy teacher makes the selection. Since a few months ago this has become the Rantei-jō (*Preface to the Lanting Gathering*) written in A.D. 353 by Ōgishi (Chinese: Wang Xizhi). There are other source texts for calligraphy to choose from. For comparison purposes to see if there a stylistic structure in old Chinese sources I am also reading *Kyūseikyū Reisen-me* (九成宮醴泉銘) by Ōyōku [Ōu Yang Xun], which was written in 632, and the *Senjimon* (千字文) written by a descendant of Ōgishi named Chiei (智永), who was a Zen Buddhist priest in the early

7th century. These two works, the former a descriptive text (it reads like an on-site investigation report, including time and persons involved) on the *Kyūseikyū* palace (formerly known as *Jinjukyū*), a water spring, and finding it accidentally (the game is afoot). The latter is a poem of one thousand characters that begins by making clear the beginning or the setting (time and place), then adding historical persons and or philosophical principles and finally concluding with a message to the reader. The poem, too, follows this structure. With only these three sources mentioned it is too early to make definite statements on the universal structure for all classical texts in Chinese used to study calligraphy. Uozumi (2020) in his book on Ōgishi describes this classic structure in four traditional progressions: introduction (起), development (承) denouement (転 “turn” of the storyline), and conclusion (結) (pp. 142, 144).

With this as a basic starting point, I would like to resume with the main topic of this article, the Rantei-jō (*Preface to the Lanting Gathering*) and its author. For calligraphy Ōgishi is very influential in history and at present. Here I will not fully address his life and the political and historical situation during his lifetime from 318–420 (?). That requires an article on its own to do justice to him. There are some fine publications to consult further on Ōgishi and his calligraphic works, including his views and philosophical ideas. Uozumi (2020) and Yoshikawa (2017) are of a very recent date.

It suffices to say here that Ōgishi was born into a noble family from Langya (in modern Shandong province). It seems he held an army post and other government functions, while also being renowned

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for his calligraphic mastery. In his later years he moved to Kuaiji [K'uai-chi] (Shaoxing in modern Zhejiang province). Most of his children and some of his descendants also became calligraphers.

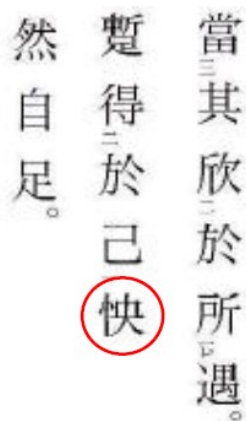
Background: What happened?

Short introduction on calligraphy in general, my specifics

During one of my monthly calligraphy work tasks (December 2022) consisting of basic tasks (required submission and content) and advanced tasks (optional but required to choose one from a larger set), I had then, already for a couple of months, been writing long calligraphies (cf. fig. 8) in a style based on the *Rantei-jō* text written by Ōgishi in A.D. 353; it is close to the *gyōsho* (行書, cursive) way of calligraphy. Before I continue I should mention that there is a controversy regarding Ōgishi as the “true” author or not and that it is possibly a forgery. This came about after an excavation in 1965 of the tomb of a cousin of Ōgishi. Both Uozumi (2020, pp 153-182) and Yoshikawa (2017, pp. 56-67) refer to this controversy in detail, but they seem not to be convinced that it is a forgery. Yoshikawa finds the line of thought matches Ōgishi’s outlook on life. Uozumi on the other hand with the application of analytical research software of the reliable text edition (Shinryū Haninbon) copied by Fushoso considered it to be very close to the original by Ōgishi. For the actual study of calligraphy we can leave the controversy further alone.

The passage concerned here has a total number of 14 characters starting from 當 ... 足 (cf. Figure 1 for the full passage). The passage refers to a changing mental state when becoming older and in forgetting the importance of happiness in life, but to keep a positive attitude to life and its challenges.

At first, I had difficulty within the passage with one of the compound expressions and the subsequent flow of thought which seemed to be a contradiction in the main text (in Chinese) and the alteration into Japanese translation. The character compound 快然 (Ōzen) that became the crux of the issue is 快; it is possible to consider the first character



快 in the compound as perhaps a variant of “Kai” 快 since its visual aspect is very close with just one stroke fewer to make it different. I will address this point further in the section on rationale but for that it is necessary to consult other sources for comparison with different calligraphic styles which may facilitate understanding (?) of the actual source at hand.

Rationale: the issue

With calligraphy we can identify two main approaches. This article does not have the purpose of criticizing either one of them. The calligrapher decides if the source text should function as primer to learn calligraphic rules and skills; or if the text content is also important. Personally, I prefer to know what I write and if the calligraphic passage makes sense content wise. Even if the calligraphy can be a passage of about 14-18 characters long (if the calligraphy is vertically in two lines; cf. Figure 8), it is important to know the general topic and content development of the whole. Ozaki (2013) has the whole text on a single page (p. 123) and with vertical lines he indicates three major sections (cf. Figure 9). The first section (on the right) starts with a description of the gathering Ōgishi attended, followed with his thoughts on human life, and concludes with the message he wants to impart to future generations.

The two approaches I mentioned earlier can be stated succinctly as:

- writing without getting to know the content, meaning, etc. (primer for writing skills)
- writing with background check of the source text and its contents (choosing the appropriate writing style to complement with the content).

I started to work on this article on calligraphy due to what I found in a major dictionary for reading classical Chinese (China before the Cultural revolution starting in 1966). Therefore, contextual calligraphy (content based) resulted in researching the double character issue: the Ōzen-Kaizen controversy and trying to solve the issue (proving to be impossible without actual primary sources written by Ōgishi in national libraries available).

The dictionary abovementioned was compiled by Morohashi Tetsuji in the 1950s and describes 快然 (Ōzen) as “being unhappy” (an unpleasant state; p. 4391), and 快然 (Kaizen) as “being happy” (a pleasant state; p. 4381). The text section with 快 as in 快然自足 is awkward because it contradicts the text content: “Unpleasantness is for me adequate.” However, the Japanese transla-

tions tend to emphasize: “a pleasant life is adequate”. Although the character 快 is in most editions clearly visible, it is being read as if it is in meaning actually 快然 (Kaizen). This point as stated earlier can be consulted in the companion book (guidebook) (p. 17) of the *Rantei-jō* (Nishibayashi & Kishida, 1995) as such.

With the *Dai-Kangorin* (1992) both characters are simultaneously visible on opposite pages, and without having to turn pages they can be consulted. The character for Kaizen (快然) is on p. 532, and the character for Ōzen (快然) is on p. 533. This was actually also one of the reasons to start writing this article. With the Morohashi dictionary (Vol. 4, p. 979, 989) they are more apart and at first I was looking mainly at one entry, namely Ōzen 快然. Therefore, the *Kangorin* contributed to the final decision of writing this article. It centers on the issue of either misreading a text (passage) or misunderstanding the flow of thought the text intends to express.

Method (A): primary (first) sources such as Ōgishi (*Rantei-jō*), Ōyōku [C. Ōu Yang Xun] (*Kyūseikyū Reisen-meī*); Chiei (*Senjimon*: personal interest)

In the introduction I referred to the content structure of these calligraphic sources. Each of them can be studied to the extent of calligraphic styles. The *Rantei-jō* for a calligraphic style close *gyōsho* (行書, cursive style) as mentioned earlier. The *Kyūseikyū Reisen-meī* on the other hand is more for regulated style comparable to the *kaisho* style (cf. fig. 7) and with the *Senjimon* there are editions of variant calligraphic styles covering *kaisho*, *gyōsho*, and *sōsho* style. In the last few years these three I have met on a regular basis. The *Senjimon* I had encountered earlier when I was still a university student some 30 years ago; at the time I considered it as a primer for calligraphic skills. However, reading the annotated edition by Kida and Ogawa (1984) reveals that it is more than that; it covers Chinese history, philosophy, and customs. With this I have reached the point of what I have called “calligraphic approaches”, in the previous section.

Method (B): consulting other sources of Ōgishi’s *Rantei-jō* (cf. Figure 10) and the practical issues regarding brush vice a vice or writing tools

Regarding the issue of the two characters,

namely 快 vs. 快, in the *Rantei-jō* most editions go for 快 but may have been misread by copyists since most of Ōgishi’s calligraphies have been entombed in the tomb of Tai Zhong (太宗. 598 - 649) at Shōryō (Zhao) (Uozumi, 2020, p. 149). This emperor ordered several masters in calligraphy to produce close to real copies of important works, among which the *Rantei-jō*, and then to be distributed among other kings and trusted vassals. A successor of Tai Zhong (太宗) successor, Gao Zhong (高宗), also made a similar order (Uozumi, p. 149). It is impossible to give a definite answer resolving whether the *Rantei-jō* is there or not. At first, it seems it was passed down in the family until Chiei. After that, it is considered as a possibility as being one of works entombed (Iijima, 1975).

One publication (the *Rantei-jō* guidebook 15, Nishibayashi) addresses this 快 vis-à-vis 快 issue in suggesting the character option of 快 (cf. Figure 3: the 2nd text edition) and therefore decreasing the contradiction issue in meaning of the passage. Interesting in this light is the edition of Nakane (1975) (cf. fig. 5) with clearly gives the annotation reading as “Kaizen” for the character compound of Ōzen and thus solves in that way the meaning of that particular passage.

There is a third option to interpret the passage as it is stated in the available editions, such as Momoyama (2019, p. 11) does wherein one is in low spirits (unhappiness), which can produce satisfaction (happiness). However, without having the possibility to confirm what Ōgishi actually wrote, we are left with the different interpretations for the time being (unless Tai Zhong’s tomb is opened for research and Ōgishi’s calligraphy works are still well conserved over the long period of entombment).

Let us consider one more matter regarding the reading of handwritten sources. The brushwork, or the brush itself, may have contributed to a slight accidental elongated 4th character stroke transferring 快 to become 快, but there is no independent evidence to confirm this hypothesis at present. One important matter to keep in mind is that facsimiles are sometimes based on stele inscriptions, and as Yoshikawa (p. 59) points out, these may affect the brushwork since both artforms use very different materials: brush and paper (calligraphy) compared to chisel and stone (stele).

Results and Discussion

The brushwork of different text editions may

result in mis-readings with similarly close characters. With the material available we can make the following observations (indeed, calligraphy is a visual art). Almost all the available editions as stated in the reference section, it seems that the character under discussion should be 快. In the Rantei-jō edition of Nishibayashi & Kishida a.o. (1995; companion book) and Nishibayashi & Fukumoto (2021; facsimile) the possibility of the character 快 is also stated. Nakane (1975) does it through his annotated translation by reading 快 as being 快; this can be seen in Figure 5. Momoyama (2019, p. 11) goes into a third option and makes a textual interpretation of the meaning of the text: hardships and happiness as possible state of being. At present, however, we cannot be sure of these possibilities since the original calligrapher is no longer available anymore to give definite answer on this matter.

In one dictionary that deals with the different styles of Ōgishi Iijima (1975) shows that the character of 快 is grouped within the dictionary entry 快, suggesting a close connection between the two (cf. Figure 4). If the original works are still in Tai Zhong's tomb and well preserved over so many centuries, then it would be possible by excavation to retrieve them and find out what Ōgishi actually wrote and thus eliminate the confusion now haunting the pages in different editions.

Conclusion

With the difficulties stated earlier in the article the teachable outcome is that we need to be attentive to the brushwork and its effects and the possible miscopying (in a non-plagiaristic sense) over the centuries, especially if characters are quite similar in appearance. As for the meaning, we can adopt perhaps a Mr. Spock approach (Star Trek) and keep an open mind to several theories at the same time. From the context of the whole text, we could acquire some basic idea of what Ōgishi wanted to impart on future generations of readers. The message could be that human life has both sides: moments of hardships and moments of happiness.

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Chiei. (? A.D.). *The Poem (Essay) of a Thousand Characters* [J. Senjimon] (Itō, S. Ed. 2013). Geijutsu shibun-sha.

Facsimile editions for calligraphic purposes: Senjimon

On the *Senjimon* (千字文) which was written by a descendant of Ōgishi named Chiei (智永 Chih-yung) in the early 7th century:

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永和九年。歲在癸丑。暮春之初。會于會稽山陰之蘭亭。脩禊事也。群賢畢至。少長咸集。此地有崇山峻嶺。茂林脩竹。又有清流激湍。映帶左右。引以為流觴曲水。列坐其次。雖無絲竹管弦之盛。一觴一詠。亦足以暢叙幽情。是日也。天朗氣清。惠風和暢。仰觀宇宙之大。俯察品類之盛。所以遊目騁懷。足以極視聽之娛。信可樂也。夫人之相與。俯仰一世。或取諸懷抱。悟言一室之內。或因寄所託。放浪形骸之外。雖趣舍萬殊。靜躁不同。當其欣於所遇。暫得於己。快然自足。不知老之將至。及其所之既倦。情隨事遷。感慨係之矣。向之所欣。俛仰之間。以為陳迹。猶不能不以之興懷。況脩短隨化。終期於盡。古人云。死生亦大矣。豈不痛哉。每覽昔人興感之由。若合一契。未嘗不臨文嗟悼。不能喻之於懷。固知一死生為虛誕。齊彭殤為妄作。後之視今。亦由今之視昔。悲夫。故列敘時人。錄其所述。雖世殊事異。所以興懷。其致一也。後之覽者。亦將有感於斯文。

Figure 2. Based on the Preface to the Lanting Gathering [J. Rantei-jō] (J. Ōgishi, C.Wang Xizhi); 2019 ed. Sha Setsuman. Nigensha.

永和九年歲在癸丑暮春之初會
 于會稽山陰之蘭亭脩禊事
 也羣賢畢至少長咸集此地
 有^{崇山}峻領茂林脩竹又有清流激
 湍映帶左右引以為流觴曲水
 列坐其次雖無絲竹管弦之
 盛一觴一詠亦足以暢叙幽情
 是日也天朗氣清惠風和暢仰
 觀宇宙之大俯察品類之盛
 所以遊目騁懷足以極視聽之
 娛信可樂也夫人之相與俯仰
 一世或取諸懷抱悟言一室之內
 或因寄所託放浪形骸之外雖
 趣舍萬殊靜躁不同當其欣
 於所遇輒得於己快然自足不

於所遇輒得於己快然自足不

知老之將至及其所之既倦情
 隨事遷感慨係之矣向之所
 欣俛仰之間以為陳迹猶不
 能不以之興懷況脩短隨化終
 期於盡古人云死生亦大矣豈
 不痛哉每覽昔人興感之由
 若合一契未嘗不臨文嗟悼不
 能喻之於懷固知一死生為虛
 誕齊彭殤為妄作後之視今
 亦猶今之視昔 悲夫故列
 叙時人錄其所述雖世殊事
 異所以興懷其致一也後之攬
 者亦將有感於斯文

王右軍蘭亭叙散筆斜
 簪自然超妙昔人以為行
 書之龍茂申之秋余嘗書
 鳥依式臨寫而通而以此本
 在吾堂上故懷自得之
 一適也 余寧夏誌記

Figure 3. Ishikawa, K. (1997). *The Universe of Calligraphy*, Vol. 6 [書の宇宙]. Nigensha.

Comparison text 1. The character in question is in the lower panel in the third column from the right.

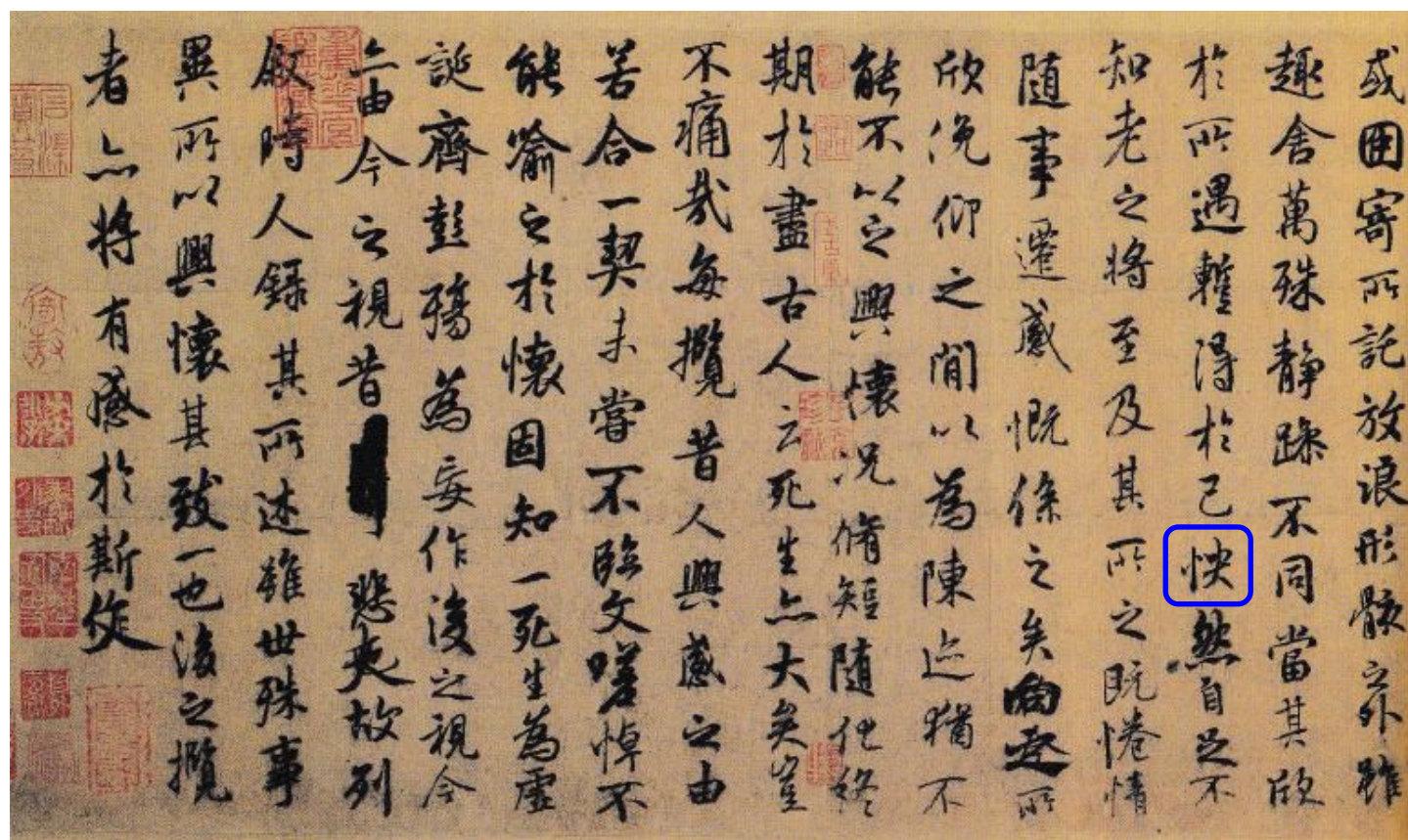
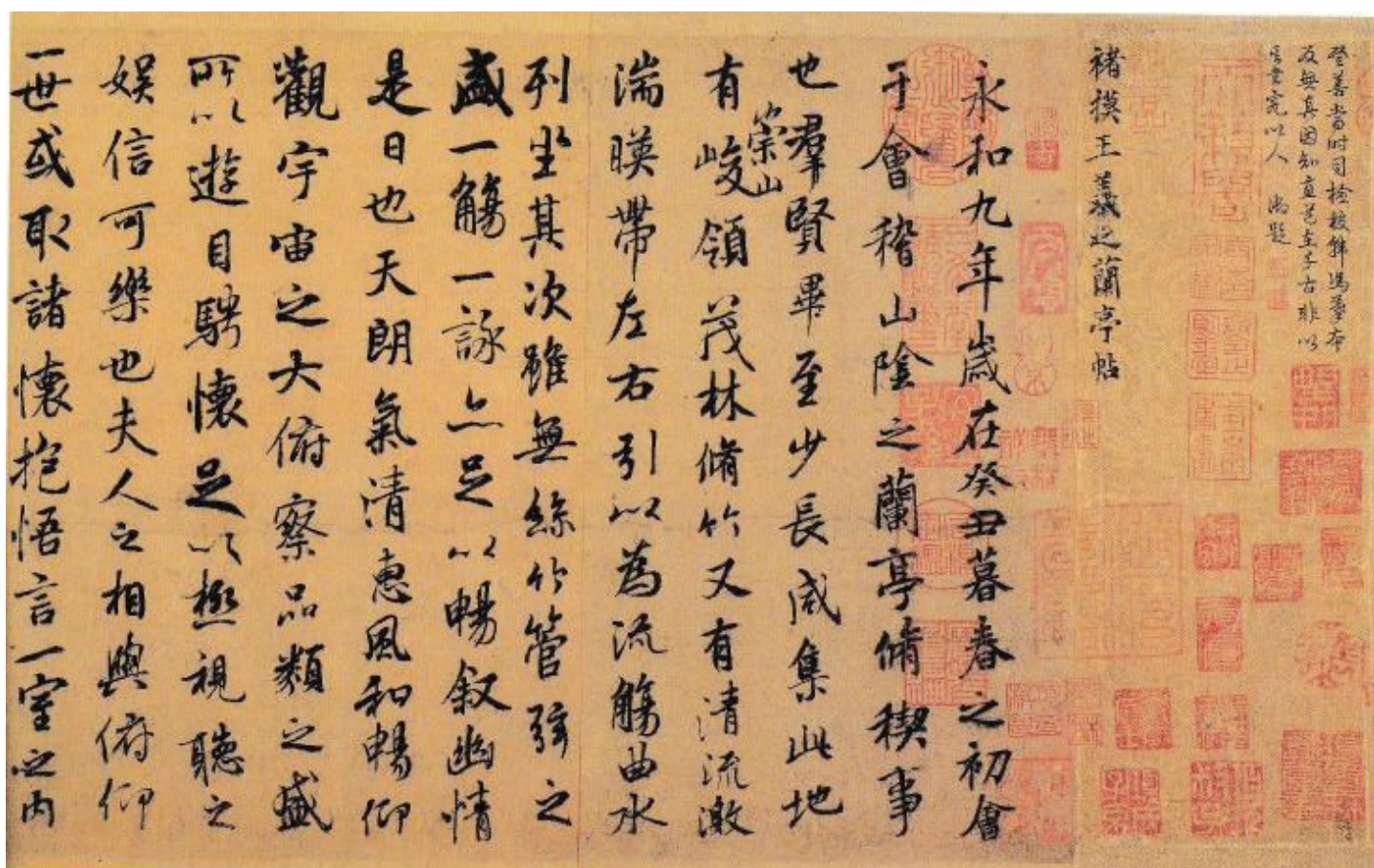


Figure 3 (continued). Comparison text 2. The character in question is in the lower panel in the third column from the right.

永和九年歲在癸丑暮春之初會
于會稽山陰之蘭亭脩禊事
也羣賢畢至少長咸集此地
有峻領茂林脩竹又有清流激
湍映帶左右引以為流觴曲水
列坐其次雖無絲竹管絃之
盛一觴一詠亦足以暢叙幽情
是日也天朗氣清惠風和暢仰
觀宇宙之大俯察品類之盛
所以遊目騁懷足以極視聽之
娛信可樂也夫人之相與俯仰
一世或取諸懷抱悟言一室之內

或因寄所託放浪形骸之外雖
趣舍萬殊靜躁不同當其欣
於所遇暫得於己快然自足不
知老之將至及其所之既倦情
隨事遷感慨係之矣向之所欣
俯仰之間以為陳迹猶不
能不以之興懷況脩短隨化終
期於盡古人云死生亦大矣豈
不痛哉每覽昔人興感之由
若合一契未嘗不臨文嗟悼不
能喻之於懷固知一死生為虛
誕齊彭殤為妄作後之視今
亦猶今之視昔悲夫故列
敘時人錄其所述雖世殊事
異所以興懷其致一也後之覽
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Figure 4. Iijima, T. (1980). The Ōgishi Character Dictionary [王羲之の字典].Tokyo Bijutsu.

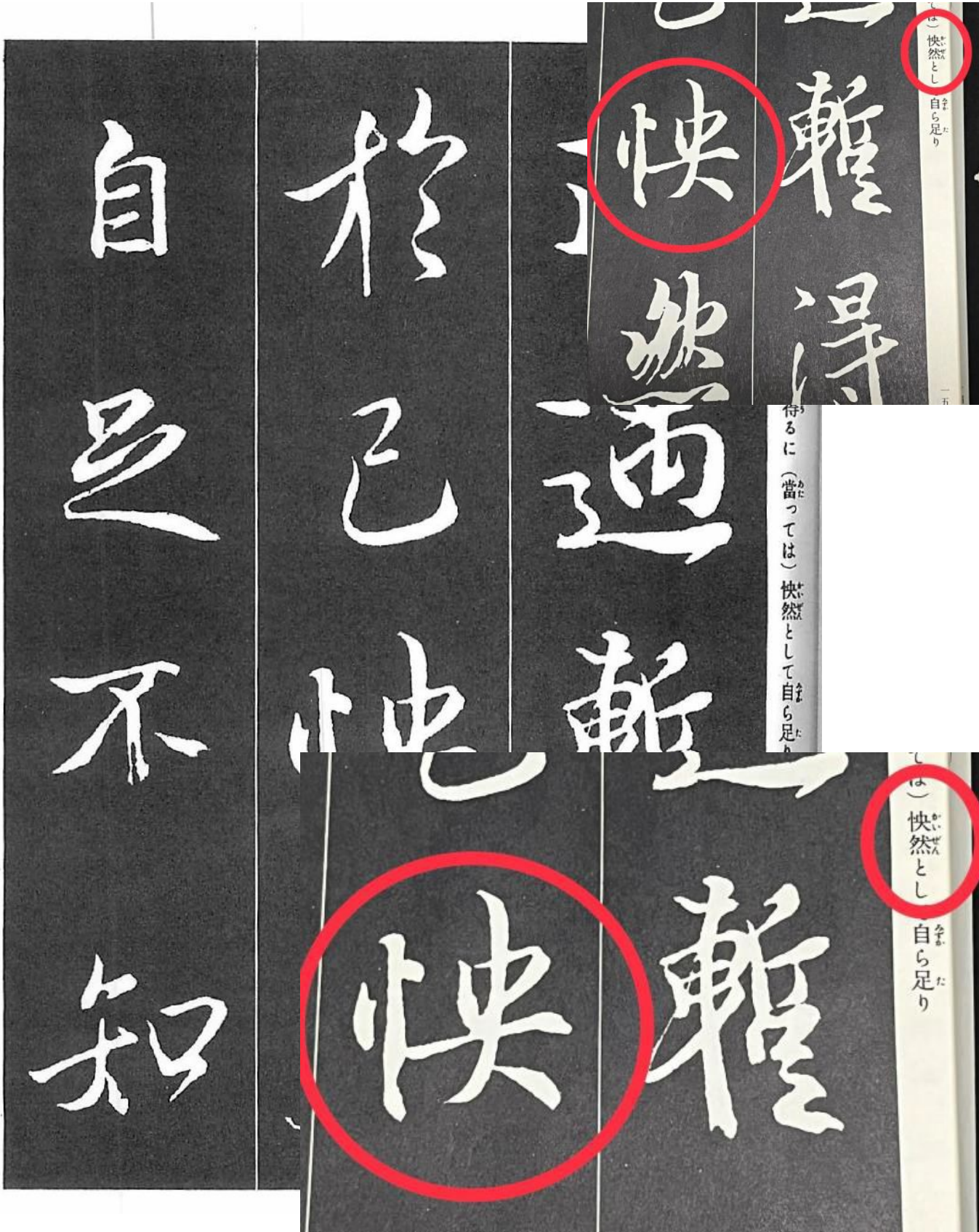


Figure 6. Ōgishi (bron: Ozaki, G. (2013)). The map shows three locations important to Ōgishi.

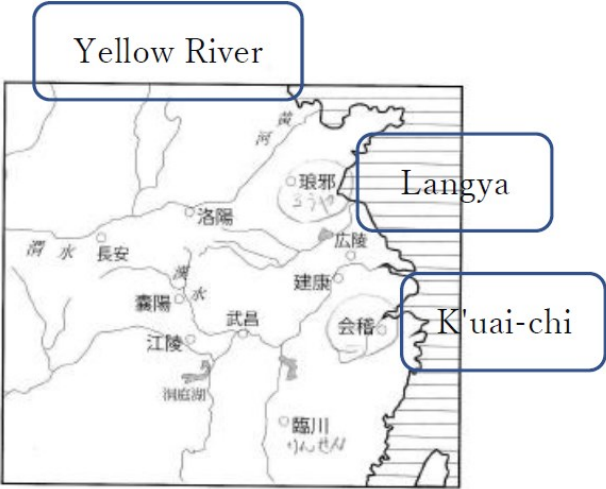


Figure 7. Calligraphy works by the author of this article. The left panel is in the *gyōsho* (cursive) style, and the right panel is in the *kaisho* style.

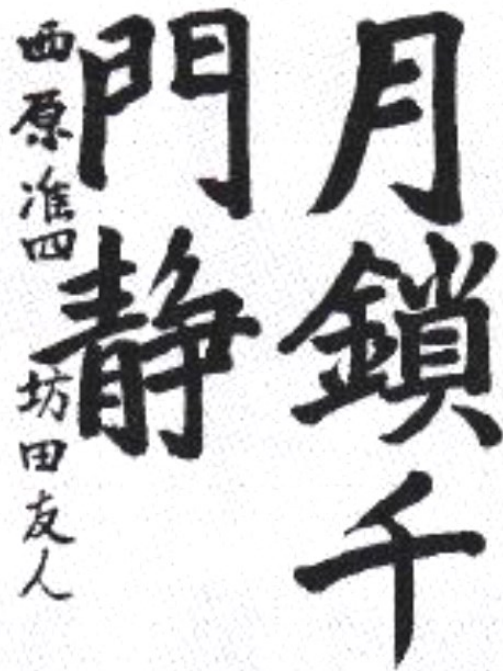


Figure 12. *Hansetsu (Jōfuku)* long calligraphy by the author of this article. The work shown includes 17 characters in 2 columns.

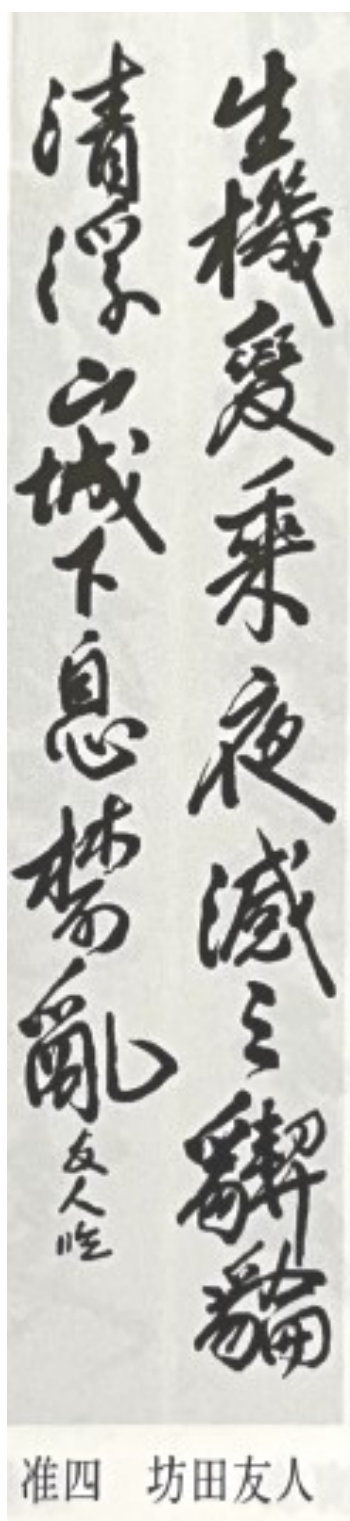


Figure 9. General text structure of the Rantei-jō (bron: Ozaki, G., 2013).

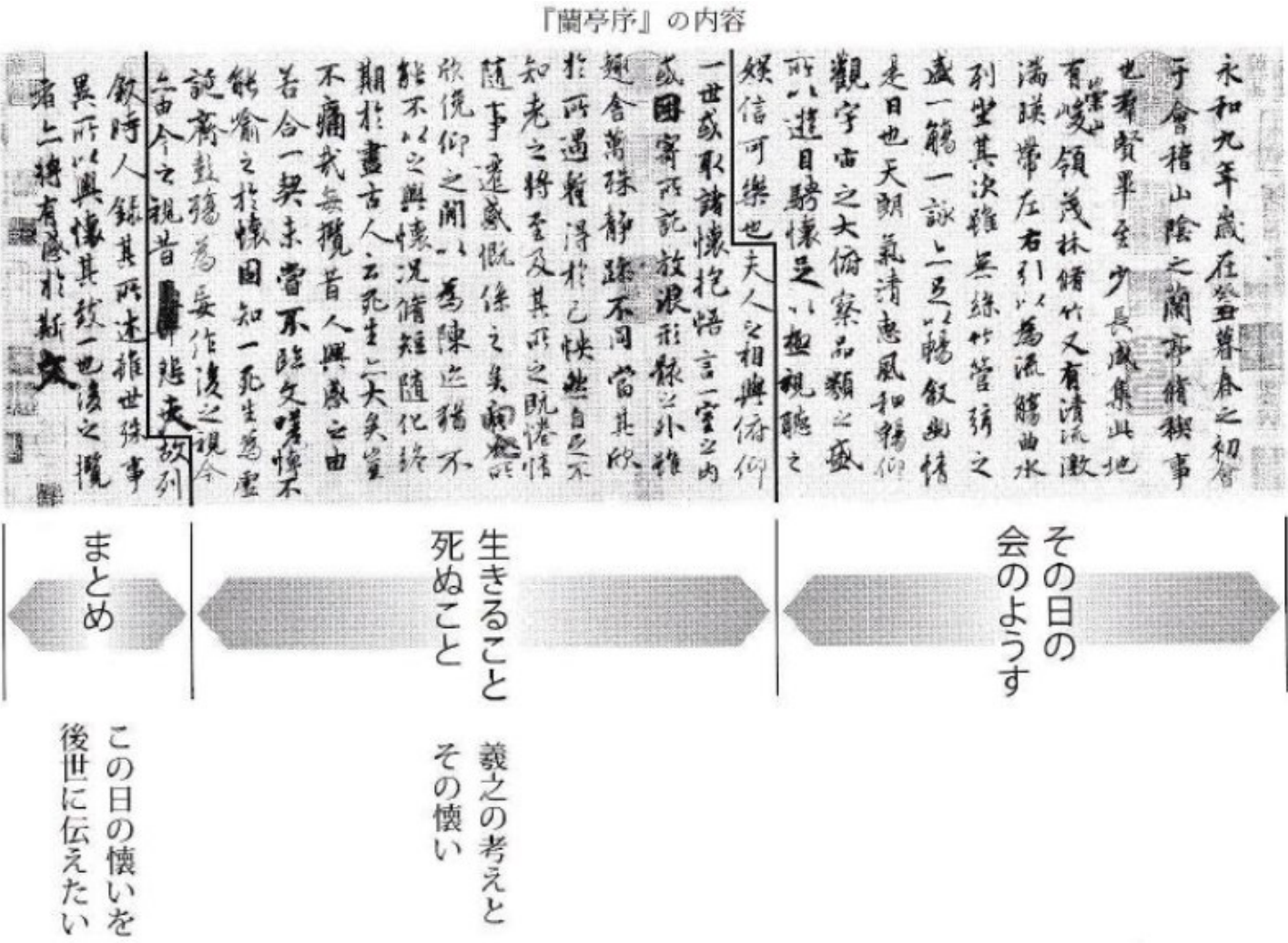


Figure 10. The various editions of the Rantei-jō.





Language Learning & Teaching

The Use of Comic Books as a Teaching Tool: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract: *Visual aids are learning resources that are visible to students and provided by teachers. Visual aids are also one way for teachers to effectively communicate a subject or a discussion to their students, so that students can familiarize themselves with content in a more effective way, retaining knowledge. Teachers can use visual aids to explain a difficult concept, clarify a discussion point or even conduct a stand-alone lesson. According to Bowman (2018), visual aids assist students in making associations between information pieces, absorbing content at a more rapid rate and serving as memory assistance. Since vision is so important to humans, students who observe and watch aids during a lesson gradually become more inspired to engage in each lesson. An example of this dynamic is comic strips. Comic strip themes are quite flexible; they can be utilized in a wide assortment of subjects, from history and writing to math and science. Educators can help students develop higher-order thinking skills such as inquiry, assessment, forecasting, and deducing by using appropriate and relevant comic strips. In our computerized environment, such multimodal text also helps students learn from visual and linguistic sources.*

This study aims to ascertain the effectiveness of using comics as a teaching tool. A quantitative study was performed, with 12 English education student-teachers using comics as visual aids in teaching elementary and junior high school students in Gifu, Japan. The results indicate that almost all elementary school students enjoyed classes that utilized comics. As for the junior high school classes, the student-teachers also received positive results, in which the students enjoyed the classes, but the enjoyment level was slightly lower compared to the elementary students.

Introduction

Students of different levels will benefit from comic strips as teaching tools in the classroom. These teaching materials are successful because they engage students in meaningful learning experiences and help students practice key skills such as composition, reading, speaking, and communicating. A comic strip, by definition, is an unfinished sensational tale about a recurring group of characters told in a series of sketches, with images and a story text exchanged regularly and, at times, published sequentially in newspapers. One aim of using comic strips as a teaching tool is so that teachers can interact with students of all learning styles and to engage a wide range of faculties (Crosby, 2020). In the grade range of 3-4, comic strips help students exercise fundamental skills such as perusing, discerning visual concepts, communicating and understanding sig-

nals for settings. For instance, with the aid of a comic, students can more easily visualize physical settings.

Comics also lead to thought-provoking questions and can aid students in comprehending complex topics in a succinct framework (Muzumdar, 2016), particularly because they are so easy to identify with. According to Plasq (n.d.), “Comics speak to students in a way they understand and identify with” (¶4). Thanks to the visual elements, students can more readily identify with the characters in the comics, which makes conveying information about language and math easier. For instance, Plasq (n.d.) discusses using comics to teach components of language.

Young students can also benefit from using comic strips to foster positive emotions, particularly if the comic strip characters are relatable. As a result, important delicate expertise, such as empathy for those less fortunate or for non-human species, that will aid students in becoming well-adjusted individuals in the future is demonstrated. Depending on the comic strip, it can even make

Crosby, R. (2023). The use of comic books as a teaching tool: A descriptive study. *OTB Forum*, 11 (1), 37-43.

them laugh, assisting teachers in reducing the pressure and tension learners may be experiencing after spending much time in school. Again, depending on the comic strip, older students can learn about current social issues. One article shows that cues are a fantastic way to get students thinking; they do not have to agree with the image being shown or message being expressed. Students are, however, encouraged to think about the situation and, preferably, make valid arguments to help them work out their emotions (Sellars, 2017).

Sellars (2017) shows how students can look at information critically through comics, and how it can increase reading comprehension. They exercise healthy skepticism. The author shows how students who read an X-Men comic can look beyond the immediate plot and essentially identify that X-Men is about non-normative characters living in an oppressive society as marginalized outcasts. One classroom teacher taught X-Men, the comic book, and had students discover salient features of oppression with respect to the text (Sellars, 2017). In this way, teachers may use comic books to teach valuable life lessons.

Visual aids are critical teaching resources that can be utilized during instruction; they facilitate reading, teaching, and presenting a theme. Visual aids facilitate visual learning and increase student success rates (Bowman, 2018). Visual learning is the method of assimilation of information by the use of visual representations. Additionally, visual learning aids students in developing visual thought, a type of learning in which a learner associates ideas, phrases, and concepts with images to better comprehend and retain knowledge.

Visual prompts, such as photographs and abstract images, can also be effective, as they penetrate the mind quicker than texts, but can also work together with text. Higher thinking abilities are founded on a solid foundation of concrete learning, which includes comprehension, external stimuli, visual feedback, and motor movements. Multisensory cues, which include visual, auditory, and tactile cues, are particularly critical for the development of young children.

Another theory relevant to teaching with comics is situated learning, which attempts to explain the power of visual stimulation in learning. The theory states that people gain information about an event through social context and significance (Hillaire, Schlichtmann & Ducharme, 2016). Comics are important for situated learning because students can look at images comprehensive-

ly to make holistic conclusions about contextual features. For instance, a comic book such as *Watchman* (Moore & Gibbons, 1986) might be a good way to teach children about what America's political landscape looked like during that era.

The role of visual aids in helping students' understanding of content is well understood by educators. Teachers value the help that visuals provide in the classroom because they enable students to make connections between different pieces of information, absorb large chunks of information easily and be instrumental for remembering (Bowman, 2018). Visual discernment and identification are important in cognitive activity and presenting information in both visual and verbal form enhances memory and recognition; in other words, any graphic, or any visual cues for that matter, improve cognition. The purpose of this study is to find out whether the utilization of comics as teaching tools is effective in elementary and junior high school students in a Japanese context.

Literature Review

In education, comics can be used as specialized educational tools. The features of comics, as well as the historical publishing industries that created them and comics' evolving position within culture, highlight the relationship between comics and education. Throughout the twentieth century, educators, readers, and publishers found comics important, though they have become more commonly known in educational contexts/discourses in recent decades. Learning, according to constructivists, is a fluid and ever-changing process. Over time, one's understanding of values or beliefs deepens and develops. Because of this, constructivist teachers emphasize the importance of students utilizing thought and research, and incrementally adding information depth and layering. Learning is an ongoing cognitive process. With respect to comic books, they can assist in this learning process through providing something additional that students can use as a supplement to their learning.

For young children, reading a comic book can be an essential part of developing good comprehension and valuable life skills. These picture books encourage young students to read between the lines and draw logical picture inferences, which improves their overall ability to make inferences (Combs, 2003). For instance, comic books can help students learn a foreign language through the supplement/support of visuals. Images can reference words written in a book to provide a con-

text for young learners. In this way students see a snapshot of the action or a representation of scenes while reading.

Constructivism is a theory that states that rather than passively absorbing information, learners construct knowledge. People's life experiences assist them in incorporating new information into their current knowledge. When students read comic books, they align memories to new knowledge (Morrison, Bryan, & Chilcoat, 2002). This means that the new information they experience while learning comes into full and comprehensive view. Simply put, comic books are utilized as a tool to help learners construct new knowledge (University at Buffalo Center for Educational Innovation, n.d.).

The use of comic books to teach elementary school students how to solve Math Word problems is the subject of a study from Batrisyia, Shahrill, Azamain, and Musa (2020). The study enlisted the participation of twelve Year 2 students from a Brunei Darussalam elementary school. To help students become more involved in their learning, a series of comics was developed, and several activities included characters adapted from local popular culture. A pre-test was provided to assess the students' previous knowledge of the words used in math word problems before the lesson intervention. Following that, a post-test was given immediately after the intervention lessons were completed to see if any performance improvements had occurred. The children were enthusiastic and engaged with the comic materials, according to a classroom evaluation distributed after the intervention. In addition, two main themes emerged from the interviews: 'Enjoyment,' which described students' excitement for and enjoyment of using comic books in the classroom, and 'Interest,' which described students' enjoyment as a result of their interest in comic books. Because of this result, the researchers encouraged educators to use comic books in the classroom, especially in mathematics, where certain concepts can be difficult for some students to understand (Batrisyia, Shahrill, Azamain, & Musa, 2020).

Comic books have also gained attention in recent years as a potential tool for teaching history to students. One of the advantages of using comic books is the fact that they can provide an engaging and visually stimulating format for conveying historical information. Additionally, comic books can offer a unique perspective on historical events. When learners engage with the material more intimately via a comic book, they can more

easily develop empathy. In addition, scenes of a comic book can be depicted in a way that will encourage critical thinking. According to Soper (2019), comic books provide a way to visualize history that can be particularly useful for students who struggle with traditional history textbooks.

One example of a comic book that teaches history is "Maus" by Art Spiegelman. This famous series tells the story of a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust and his son. Readers might be less traumatized because the characters are mice rather than humans enduring torturous circumstances of concentration camps. "Maus" not only offers a unique perspective on the Holocaust but also teaches important lessons about prejudice, resilience, and family relationships. "According to Zuckerman (2008, p. 68), "The graphic novel is an appropriate medium to discuss the Holocaust is demonstrated not only by Maus itself, but also by later graphic novels that it inspired."

Another theory applied to comics in language teaching is observational theory. According to Albert Bandura, (1977) observational theory rests on the idea that people emulate actions through everyday observation, frequently acting in the same way as others around them. Modeling, which is a key technique within observational theory, includes attention/observation, retention/emulation, motor reproduction/self-control and motivation and self-regulation (Bandura, 1977). Learners learn a behavior while it is being enacted, and then follow their own imperatives, acting in similar ways. Comic books can serve as positive role model resources for students learning a language. For instance, a graphic might display a character using certain phrases to connect with a local shop owner or police officer, modeling how English Language Learners (ELLs) can positively interact with these figures in their own lives.

Bandura's observational theory is the best theory for explaining the utility of such an effect. The reason for this is that observational learning allows people to learn as easily as possible by simply listening, watching, and visualizing a scene or situation. People's attention is captured and affected by their surroundings and atmosphere in observational learning, and in this way, they learn new things and have new experiences. Then individuals will finally comprehend the actions and then act or transform them into what they have learned externally. The same can be said about visual aids that are provided to students. When students are presented with lessons using visual aids, their attention is engaged, and they are allowed to use the

lessons presented as a model to strengthen and refine their learning skills so they can equate what they see with what they hear, making it easier to fully comprehend a subject.

Mitchell and Milan (2008) conducted a study on high-interest comics and their positive impact on children's behavior, particularly in the pro-social direction. These researchers wanted to gauge, unlike other studies, how comics could be used in real-life settings to improve social outcomes and cooperation. "The results demonstrate that high-interest cartoon models are both effective and feasible agents for positive behavioral change when used within the generalized imitation framework" (Mitchell & Milan, 2008, p.15).

Methods

For this study, I have utilized the quantitative method to observe and collect responses and information from the students who have experienced comics as a teaching tool firsthand. For two years, data was collected over a two-year period from university students majoring in English Education in Gifu, Japan. Each student completed one month of student teaching at an elementary school and one further month at a junior high school. The chart below (Figure 1) is a breakdown of the number of students the teachers taught as student-teachers, as well as combined responses of elementary school (ES) and junior high school (JHS) students regarding the use of comics as a teaching tool.

During their university teaching practicum, students were required to try out different teaching methods and keep track of the results. These students were to compare how comics/visual aids were used in the classroom and how the young learners reacted. Their experiences lasted one

month and they performed two sessions, one at junior high school and one at elementary school.

The comics used by the student-teachers were mostly from comic books as they were unaltered, and showed some scenarios that the students may encounter in real life; the others were comics in which the student teachers changed the text on speech balloons so that the material could be used to relate to the subject they were discussing. All the comic strips that were used incorporated well-known characters and thus the student teachers did not make their characters. Some of the characters were Batman, Superman, SpongeBob SquarePants, various Avengers characters, and other characters from popular Japanese comic books as well. The student-teacher provided feedback to the children orally to enhance communication and strive to ensure they obtained truthful answers. Also, oral feedback was considered a more discrete method that would protect the children's privacy.

Student teachers at the university were free to devise their own customized lesson plans that incorporated comic activities. Student teachers attempted to use oral and written aids instead of visual aids during at least one lecture. They were to use materials, such as graphic organizers, in another class. Many student teachers used comic books to illustrate conversations. Others used blank dialog bubbles in comics and let the learners fill them in, allowing them to create and then have conversations using comic books. Some teachers used the pictures as conversation starters, asking the learners to explain what was going on in the scene.

The following are visual representations or approximations of these materials:

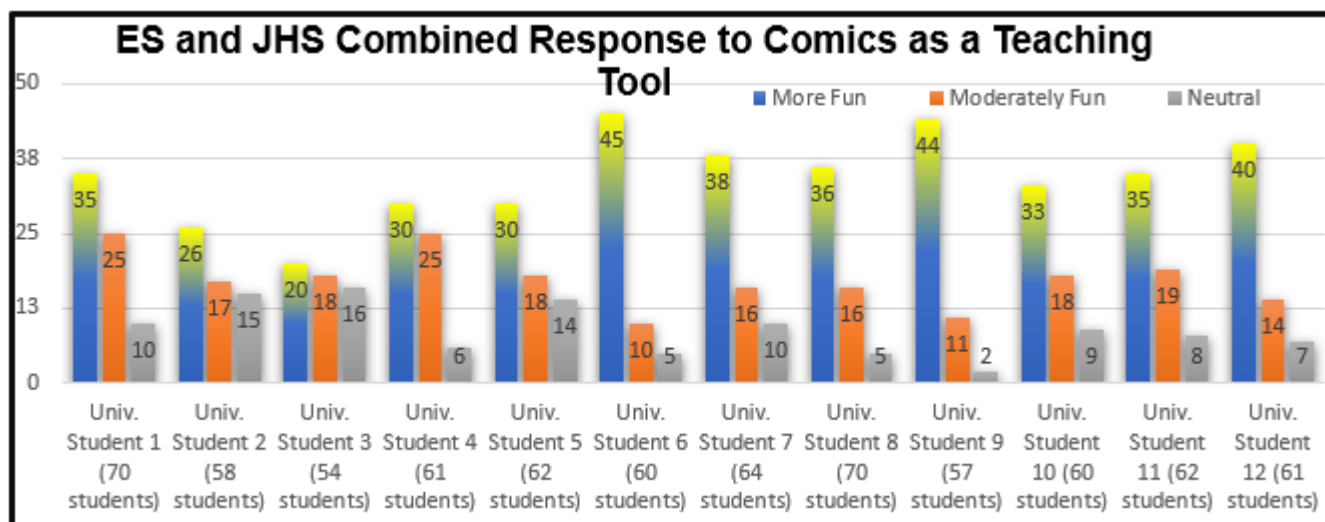
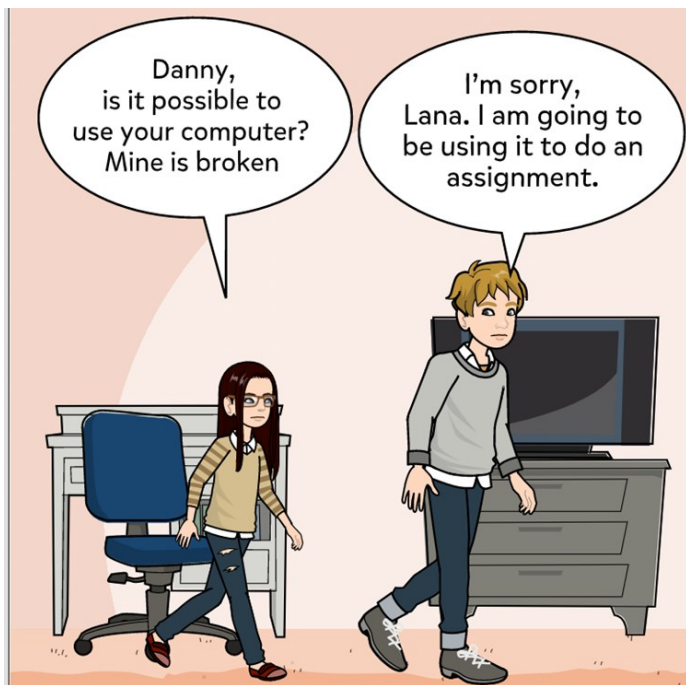


Figure 1. ES and JHS students' responses concerning comics as a Classroom Activity

1. Illustrating Conversations (from Pixton, an online comic creator website)

Here, the comic book created by the student teachers illustrates a casual conversation between two people, showing students how to politely ask for something and apologize for not being able to provide it, within formal contexts such as in an office or classroom setting.

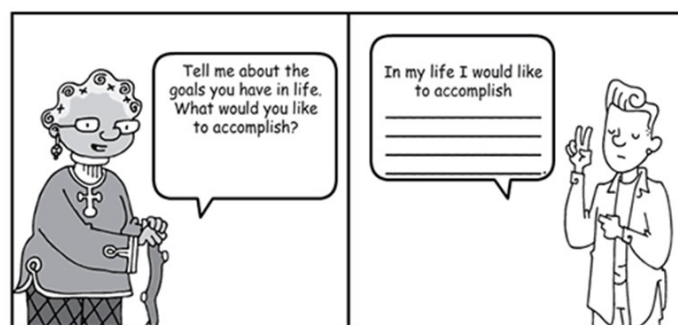


2. Blank dialogue bubbles

Here, students fill in the dialogue bubble. The comic book creator from Pixton was used by the instructor to create the comic book. Students can be creative in what information/dialogue they want to insert here.



3. Conversation starters



Results

The response in elementary school was overwhelmingly positive. The students said that using comics helped them envision situations that would have been very difficult to visualize otherwise. Many children, especially boys, enjoyed seeing superheroes in the classroom, according to one student teacher, and this increased motivation. Most children said that the class that used visual aids was much more enjoyable than the classes that did not. According to the student teachers, the classroom was livelier (in comparison to other/typical classrooms) and most of the class members (approximately 85%) participated in recitations about the content, or just shared thoughts about the content. The use of popular and recognizable superheroes (Superman, The Hulk, Spiderman) and cartoon characters (Garfield, Elsa from Frozen, and other notable Disney characters) has been noted by the student teachers as the most popular.

The findings were almost identical in junior high school. When asked if they liked the activity, they said, 'yes', which corroborated the observations the student teachers made. In their classes, many of the student teachers found that there was more general interest in the younger group. In this sense, the comic books seemed to appeal even more to the younger audience.

Discussion

Aside from the entertaining aspect of using comics as a tool for teaching, they also integrate with the students' interest in specific characters that appear in the comics. This was the same for me when I was a child. In every morning newspaper that my family received, I would quickly scan through the paper and find the entertainment section, where the comics are placed. Comics are very appealing, especially to children. Teaching in general, incorporated with humor and entertainment, is already proven effective as it creates an atmosphere inside the classroom that is lighter, making the classroom more learner-

friendly. This also helps to build a student-teacher relationship.

As a result of the students' engagement with comics, they finally received new learning opportunities based on what they had seen and heard at the end of each discussion. In this case, it is important to remember that Albert Bandura's observational theory states that observational learning is extremely sensitive and influential in many ways because it describes and affects how people function and is often modeled. The impact of cultivating or enhancing an individual's intellect, atmosphere, and social behavior enhances this (Shettleworth, 2010). Observational theory helps to underscore this study's thesis that comic books can be a tool to secure more comprehensive and nuanced understandings of material. Observational theory also works when an individual learns and adopts a particular behavior rather than simply imitating it, which is why Bandura claims that children are the most vulnerable individuals when exposed to observational learning because they choose both desirable and undesirable behavior, making this a very strong model that dictates and explains how individuals function and operate (Stone, 2005).

In general, Bandura's observational learning theory is focused on behavior evaluation as well as learning and identifying the core elements or behaviors that learners appear to exhibit. It is also a type of learning that does not require reinforcement; in reality, it is a form of entertainment learning in which learners enjoy watching and listening to comics, drama, and other forms of entertainment while learning, as opposed to traditional learning with a teacher or instructor, which may have limitations. Therefore, it is essentially observation, learning through viewing, and listening. We can use Bandura's observational learning theory to suggest that learning is based on learners being provided rich content so that they can then choose the elements most salient to them.

As a result, the style of learning is relevant in the growth of children. Observational learning is a recommended intervention and solution to promoting the better growth of children from a psychological perspective, and it benefits children extensively with respect to social behavior change and development, making them interactive and curious to learn more. In other words, through examples provided in comic books, children can learn essential and new responses such as how to react when approached by an elderly individual or even a parent or how to respond when given a gift by someone. This is important even within the context of language learn-

ing. Children use comic books as models and templates to assist them with acquiring language and being able to converse in certain settings. To clarify, there is a strong link between using comic books and observational learning. Observational learning involves viewing something and modeling behavior after it, which is what students can do when they view visual aids. Children can also join a peer group that doesn't study, gets into trouble and engages in negative habits, which they pick up through observational learning, particularly in new contexts they have not been previously exposed to. With regards to comics and language learning, teachers can model positive behavior and words to students, which ensures they have effective communication skills.

Conclusion

Looking at comics as a visual aid learning tool involves graphical learning, which is important in children, and as a result, children can copy or adapt some of the behaviors illustrated in comic learning. A practical example of the Mitchell and Milan study mentioned in earlier could be, for instance, a comic book for an ELL that models how to appropriately talk to teachers/instructors during class, when to ask questions or how to cooperate/collaborate with other students in a group. Children can act, talk, mimic sounds, pose like characters in comic learning material and behave like characters in a learning toolkit during classroom activities.

These are all instances of observational learning. In this regard, comics aim to improve social learning and interaction, as well as behavior copying or learning and observational learning. Comics also provide social models such as teachers and parents who guide learners through the entire learning process; hence, it is a representation of observational learning (Shettleworth, 2010).

Using comics in teaching languages among children and teens is highly beneficial in learning (Swain, 1978). It is termed a fun art-enrichment activity. When students are acquiring new knowledge or are beginning to read, comics help in offering them a narrative experience. As such, the students can more easily follow the plot of the story up to the end (Sarada, 2016). Through comics, children and teens get to be actively engaged with comic books. This happens especially when images are sequenced within several boxes. Using comics in teaching languages to children or teens, large amounts of information can be presented to learners over a short period. On the other hand, it is not only large amounts of data but also the understanding that comes with the use of comics. Developing activities that utilize

comics to make learning fun and more engaging to children and teens is one of the ways teachers make their classroom lessons more effective.

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International Education for Youth Development: Report on a Collaboration Program between Athena Eikaiwa & Little Oranges

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Abstract: *Globalisation has given a connection to the world regardless of the borders and languages. In the Athena Eikaiwa & Little Oranges project, English is the language that connects participants from different countries, and also it is a tool in education for children with developmental disabilities. This collaboration program focuses on promoting the development of language in children applying English education. Also, to make children enjoy the English experience and communicate with instructors from different nationalities. The program demonstrated positive effects on children including promoting the development of language. Furthermore, online resources in education are applied as a tool to develop the quality of the English education program and also to connect with instructors despite the physical location.*

Keywords: International education, youth development, English (second language), intellectual disabilities, developmental disorder

Background

Living in a globalized world represents a series of opportunities for the population and at the same time a series of challenges to overcome. Globalization and the connection of cultures and countries have created an implicit need for learning a foreign language and the feeling that knowing one's native language only is not enough. According to Smith (2018), the ability to learn a new language, grammatically, is better before 18 years old; and to become completely fluent is necessary to start learning it before the age of 10. In the ranking of languages spoken around the world, English turns out to be the first, even though it has the third position if only native speakers are considered. This is a key to consider when the importance of learning is evaluated. English has turned into a common link between people to connect when their native language is not spoken.

Children are growing exposed to new challenges. This is a general statement that doesn't really consider all children. Society is formed by diverse heterogeneous groups that are not always considered when offering services. However, every human being should have access to quality services regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Developmental disabilities are defined as "the group of

conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas" (Centers for Disease and Control Prevention, 2022). Mostly, the organizations that work for this group tend to have higher prices compared to the market as it requires diverse preparation from the personnel and the facilities. For this reason, Athena Eikaiwa and Little Oranges decided to collaborate in order to make a program in the field of international education for youth development. Teaching children proper pronunciation of the target dialect can help them to increase their confidence and self-esteem. The program offered by Little Oranges covers needs for children with developmental disabilities and Athena Eikaiwa offers English programs for a variety of groups. The founders of both organizations work towards quality services and accessibility. By working together, both improve their services and extend their reachable audience developing a program in language education for the youth.

In Japan, the number of children with developmental disorders have been increasing. The condition and symptoms of developmental disorder had started to be recognized in 1990s and about 8.8% of children (age 6 to 15) are diagnosed as developmental disorders in the research done by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2022. It showed a 2.3% increase from the previous research performed in 2012.

There are special classes for those children with developmental disorders where they can study in much smaller groups (typically up to 6

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children) than usual classrooms with specialized teachers with certification. Though they are not normally specialized in teaching English. As for teaching English for children with developmental disorders, it is more challenging than other subjects since there is a lack of research or studies. Having both professional skills in teaching children with special needs and teaching English are required to provide English education for children with special needs.

Collaborators

Introduction of Little Oranges

NPO Little Oranges was established in July 2018 by author NH. Its main mission is to provide educational services in physical activity, sports, and the English language for children with developmental disabilities. The organization's mission and goals are: "Every activity is to enjoy and have fun" and additionally to "Provide each child with or without disabilities the opportunities to be praised, to feel successful and to be loved". Following these ideas, NPO Little Oranges (LOs) manages an out-of-school program¹ that prepares and produces original and unique activities to help children's growth.

NH was born and raised in Japan by her Japanese parents and learned her second language which is English and cultural differences by going abroad. She has teaching experience in English education for over a decade targeting participants in a wide range from 2 years old to adults. With this experience, she realized that the language acquisition process brings dynamic effects in various ways to people's growth. Every individual uses some type of language with or without disabilities and uses the language by listening, speaking, reading, writing, communicating, learning, and even thinking. By learning a second language, those effects will not simply double, but multiply. This understanding of the importance of learning a second language made her confident that providing English education in the NPO service will only provide benefits for children with disabilities.

Introduction of Athena Eikaiwa

Athena Eikaiwa is a language education program of Active Life, a volunteer organization for

social development through sports and language education. Active Life is willing to contribute to international exchange in the community between local Japanese citizens and the international residents in Japan. The English program was established by two certified international teachers who are residents of Japan. TS and JH have a strong relationship with Japan through their family connection and were coworkers in an NPO developing an English program in an afterschool. TS is originally from Ecuador and has 16 years of teaching experience in different areas of language education with students of different ages, including children in kindergarten, elementary school students, university students, adults, and elderly groups. JH is originally from the Philippines and has experience in teaching elementary students from the 1st grade to 6th grade in an afterschool program and as a private tutor of young adults.

The founders have seen positive effects, including progress in language ability and the motivation of their students to learn the language. With that experience, they decided to enhance their capacity to connect and provide the quality of teaching that is suitable to the learning environment by taking training courses and acquiring a certificate in TESOL/TEFL (Teaching English as a Second Language/Teaching English as a foreign language). The idea and goal of establishing Athena Eikaiwa are to help the needs of society by improving the ability to communicate with young learners and adults while learning English.

In Japan, there are some students who attend lessons after school to learn English and pass exams for proficiency. However, some people still struggle when applying English in real daily interactions. Additionally, the prices of eikaiwa English schools are not accessible to all learners. According to Eikaiwa School research (2020), the price market for a 50-minute group lesson is around ¥3000. Besides, there are extra fees of ¥20,000 to ¥30,000 for enrollment and ¥5,000 to ¥20,000 for study materials. The cost of group lessons changes depending on the number of participants, meaning costs increase when the number of students decreases. Considering this, Athena Eikaiwa provides a high-quality service with international teachers at a lower price from the market where learners can see their own progress and be able to apply their language skills

TS and JH established Athena Eikaiwa to apply

¹Out-of-school refers to any service provided after the school schedule where children can learn and be taken care of by qualified staff until the parents come to pick them up. This is referred to as 放課後等デイサービス (hōkagotō day service) in Japanese.

the learning methods they used: learner-centered learning method and interactive/participative learning method. Athena Eikaiwa focuses on providing a program with

1. Internationally qualified coordinators who make the syllabus and contents of the program for the progress of students. AE collaborates with international teachers of different nationalities to provide their students with the experience of learning English through diversity.
2. Game-based learning (Interactive and participative style of teaching)
3. Building self-confidence in speaking by working on pronunciation and encouraging them to believe in their abilities to communicate by not being shy and getting scared to make mistakes.

Besides the founders of Athena Eikaiwa who manage the program, there are other teachers collaborating with lessons. JH is the coordinator of the program. She manages the syllabus and contents of the lessons. Plus, she is in charge of following teachers' work and progress to establish an original program of Athena. Also, KP started to contribute to the coordination team as an assistant with the planning of schedules and communication with staff and students. In the teacher's team, we have teachers from Ecuador, India, Poland, El Salvador, and Cuba. In regards to the qualifications, some of our teachers are certified as TESOL teachers and also some of them work for international schools and after schools.

Athena and LOs challenges in foreign language education

Foreign Language

At the time of studying English in Japan, some places generally use the katakana alphabet to represent sounds. However, English basic sounds include 44 phonemes: 20 vowel sounds and 24 consonant sounds (Rao, 2015). It is important to note that the combination of letters is not considered in this number. Phonotactics is the combination of sounds and cannot be objectively measured as there are different pronunciations depending on the region where English is spoken. Nevertheless, according to Baayen (2003), there are at least 80 more sounds besides the basic ones. This means that so far there are 124 English sounds. The

number of sounds in English is said to be around 1800 more or less, according to English teachers with experience. This is widely different compared to the Katakana sounds which are about 70.

Having pronunciation from the Japanese language applied to English sounds has been challenging when learners try to speak English to international speakers. Some people feel they cannot communicate and feel English is “difficult”, so it can become a language that is not attractive to learn. It is common to listen to young learners say, “I don’t like English because it is difficult.”

Since many Japanese teachers are not able to pronounce English properly and use katakana at the time of teaching, students learn English with a Japanese pronunciation. Although the students study hard and get good grades on school tests, many of them have a difficult time when speaking with native speakers.

“Katakana is not English. There are so many sounds in the English language that do not exist in katakana” (Serourian & Hackshaw, 2012). It is necessary to teach the language emphasizing the pronunciation of sounds that don’t exist in the Japanese language avoiding the transition to katakana spelling. It can be confusing for new learners when the writing is pronounced in one way and the speaking pronunciation is a different one; it might be easier for them to trust the writing one as it can be read. It is unnecessary to build the habit of writing a pronunciation that is incorrect and that will lead to difficulties in future performance. According to Brown (1997), developing discrimination skills for pronunciation in the language is an ability that cannot be acquired if katakana is used to simulate the sounds. The biggest challenge when developing this Japanized speaking form based on katakana is that English speakers who have never had a relation with Japanese pronunciation will not understand it.

There is also the “native speaker teacher” challenge for the program. Native speakers are seen as a model of teachers in education as they are considered to use language correctly in producing error-free English (Todd, 2006). Athena and the LOs program focus on collaborating with qualified teachers regardless of their nationalities. Also, to provide children with an international environment in which English is a means of communication with the world.

Hence, in Athena Eikaiwa there are no native speakers but there are qualified English teachers who are able to teach English at a native level. Moreover, all of them are the result of learning

English as a second language so they can also apply learning methods that were applied themselves at the time of learning English.

Youth development

Numbers of research results explain the positive effects of acquiring a second language in the neuroscience and cognitive science areas. Also, the success of acquiring a beautiful second language requires consistent language stimulation (Saito, 2017).

In the case of Little Oranges, there are 50 students registered, all of whom have challenges and difficulties in their lives. Six of them were diagnosed with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), four with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), one with Learning Disorder (LD), two with physical disabilities, and three with developmental disabilities.

The problems that children with disabilities face can be hard and unreasonable. Though, surprisingly, the most difficult part is that others cannot understand their problems at all. Most children with developmental disabilities cannot be defined by their appearance. Their appearance looks like other children, so their behavior due to their disabilities may look like just a lack of effort or just being selfish toward other people.

Each child has a different personality and character so the challenges and difficulties vary on each student. Some of them have to deal with their impulsive characteristics so sometimes it is extremely difficult for them to just be seated in class quietly.

Some others react with more sight predominantly, so they can not follow verbal instructions. Furthermore, children who lack strength in their eye movement can have a hard time copying what's written on the blackboard in front of the class to their own notebooks.

Purpose of Collaboration

The purposes of making a collaboration program of Athena Eikaiwa and Little Oranges include the following:

1. To improve the language ability by applying English education in children with developmental disabilities
2. To have children enjoy their English experience and communicate with international instructors

Athena Eikaiwa and Little Oranges Collaboration

Project Summary

Little Oranges, Hōkagotō Day Service in Kanoya City, Kagoshima Prefecture, operates and manages the out-of-school English education program. It focuses on the importance of proper pronunciation for children with developmental disabilities such as developmental disabilities including ASD, LD, or ADHD.

Most of the cost of the Hōkagotō Day Service is provided by the Japanese national health insurance. The careful assessment is provided for children with disabilities and the local government gives the certification to access the service when it is needed. Therefore, parents of these children have less financial load to join the out-of-school education programs. For the collaboration program of English from Athena Eikaiwa and Little Oranges, LOs pay a tuition fee for each lesson to Athena Eikaiwa and there is not an additional charge to the children or the parents to receive the service.

Little Oranges (LOs) has motivated itself to provide a service with proper English pronunciations since November 2021. From May 2022, LOs started to collaborate with Athena Eikaiwa service with international English teachers through online lessons.

The English lesson has a duration of 40 to 50 minutes, and the contents of the lessons include

1. Greetings and feelings
2. Check the date and weather
3. Introduction of a topic (English grammar or vocabulary)
4. Activity or Game
5. Worksheet or Review
6. Closing Greetings

Athena classes are organized by following a lesson plan from a syllabus made by the coordinators in collaboration with the teachers who have a certificate in education or experience in education in Japan. The contents are based on the needs of the learners. Athena provides two different classes to Little Oranges which are: zero to beginners (Gold) and beginners to intermediate (Gold Eiken) (see Table 1). Each teacher provides a slide of a complete lesson based on the assigned topic. The whole lesson includes greetings and talking about dates, weather, season, feelings, songs, and other

Table 1. Schedule and Lessons

Day	Monday and Friday	Tuesday	Thursday
Level at LOs	Elementary	Elementary to Intermediate	Intermediate to Advanced (Eiken 5)
Level at Athena	Gold (For Fun)	Gold	Gold (Eiken 5)
Main Content	Do not need to “study” the goal is to have fun with English.	Basics of English: phonics, basic writing, reading, vocabulary and structures of daily life	Contents for Eiken 5 and basic communication in daily life situations

topics. Athena applies synthetic phonics to teach children how to read and how to pronounce the words from original English. The phonics does not include katakana or hiragana words or sounds because Athena encourages the children to learn the alphabet sounds in a natural way. The program applies game-based learning to practice and memorize the words.

This method is very effective to let the learners enjoy and interact more. Finally, teachers use worksheets to practice writing and reading comprehension (Figure 1). The worksheet is a summary of the whole lesson which also helps the teachers to identify the level of understanding of learners. Additionally, when reviewing the worksheet, children interact individually with the teacher to get more confidence with their own work.



Figure 1. Gold Class: Showing the answered worksheet to the teacher.

Participants and Beneficiaries

The number of participants registered for the English program is 29. Each session includes two to seven students from six to 15 years old. One teacher from Athena is in charge of the online lesson while two or three teachers of LOs help with the management of the class and support children on site (see Figure 2). The teachers from Athena Eikaiwa only speak English during the entire

class and on-site Japanese teachers help using Japanese only if it is needed. The minimum use of Japanese language gives more chances for the children to listen, speak, think and communicate in English, which is a very unique environment compared to typical English classes in elementary or junior high school classes, which are mainly conducted by Japanese-native teachers.

The total number of LOs teachers is 12. From Athena five to six teachers take the lessons and prepare the contents. Three to four other volunteers help to prepare the online material of the program according to the syllabus and coordination from JH.

From the start of this service in May 2022, we held online lessons by Athena 39 times, in which a total of 246 students participated in the lessons until the beginning of October. This collaboration program, which is between an NPO, LOs, and the volunteer organization Athena, aims to strengthen their working team and make a stronger program to promote and spread the program to more children around Japan.

Children’s Development through English Education

There are specific examples of the development of learners in the program. For instance, one stu-



Figure 2. Gold-Eiken Class.

dent with ADS originally only had a way to communicate by repeating back the same phrase, but he became able to communicate in the way of questions and answers, especially in English. For example, when the teacher said to the boy “What day is it today?” he used to reply, “What day is it today?” After a few months, now he is able to reply to the question, for instance: “Thursday!”

Moreover, students with acoustic hyperesthesia have high copying ability from listening to speaking. They can repeat the teacher’s sound correctly with beautiful English pronunciation. Also, they say it is quite easy to mimic the sounds. Therefore, they feel motivated and are enjoying the process of learning English.

Additionally, when speaking English with Katakana pronunciation, the pronunciation would be using the same facial muscles, respiratory system, and same simulations as speaking Japanese. On the other hand, in our program, students are using English pronunciation with correct phonics, they use completely different facial muscles and respiratory systems and stimulate their brain and nerve systems differently. This is also a great way to improve the stammering problem that some of the students have when speaking even in Japanese.

In addition to these great effects, we observed that the students are able to feel confident and have higher self-esteem by acquiring the proper English pronunciation. Children with developmental disabilities in a typical classroom at school tend to be scolded more often and forced to apologize for their non-ideal behavior. Being able to acquire the unique abilities that the program provides, they have more chances to be praised and be confident which brings higher self-efficiency which could be most valuable for the children.

Parents’ Feedback

From the total number of LOs participants, there are 50 students registered. A total of 31 of them are enrolled in the English program. 14 parents collaborated with their opinion about the English program. In the reasons for choosing the English lessons, 60% of the parents choose to improve the child’s communication ability, 53.3% chose: (a) the child had an interest; (b) to know

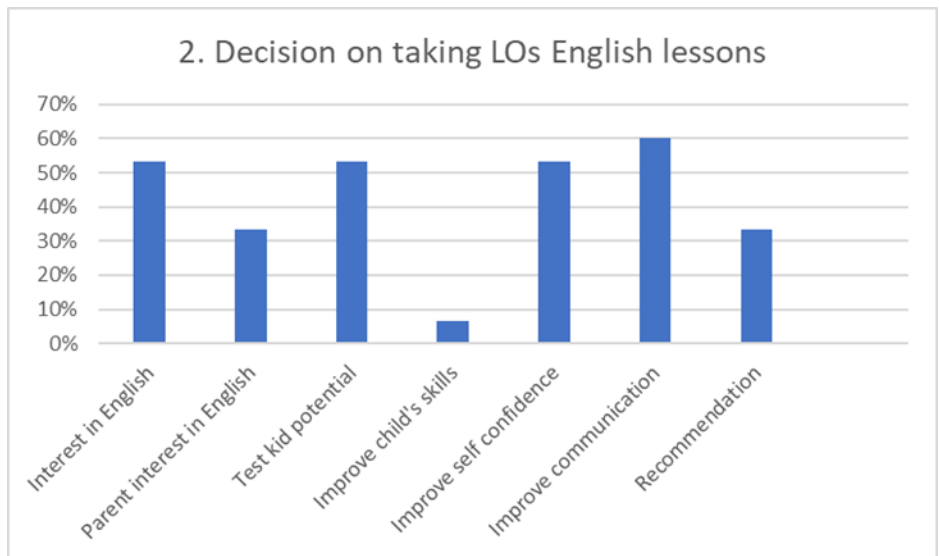


Figure 4. Parents’ Feedback

about the child’s potential; and (c) to give the child more self-confidence. 33.3% of the participants also mentioned that parents had an interest in English or a third person recommended it. 6.7% mentioned improving the child’s weakness. After children were involved in the program, 66.7% of parents mentioned that children enjoy the class and 60% mentioned that children got more interested in English and/or foreign countries. 33% mentioned children acquired English skills and 26.7% mentioned that children became more confident (see Figure 4). English lessons have provided children with an international environment that motivates them not only to join the lessons, but also to apply communication skills in English while becoming more self-confident.

From the school feedback, 33% of parents heard that the English and Japanese pronunciation of children improved. 20% of parents mentioned the school feedback about a) acquiring English abilities, b) becoming more confident, and c) getting more interest in English or/and foreign countries. 13.3% of parents said their communication skills improved.

53.3% of children had experienced a situation communicating in English with foreigners or speaking at home and 100% of participants are considering letting their children take the program.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

During the development of this program, children were able to improve their language ability and enjoy the English experience communicating with international instructors. Both organizations

worked on developing the program to make it suitable for participants. Additionally, cooperating in a program using online resources, LOs and Athena faced some challenges, but were able to adjust to maintain the quality of the service and adapt to the students' needs.

Collaboration between organizations is very important for EFL instruction. This collaboration has benefits for improving not only the programs of education for children but also to their social growth through various activities with international ambiance.

Our strength is that being able to work in this program with the same goal of improving the quality of Language Education, we are motivated to learn and adapt new ways and techniques to teach, especially to children with learning disabilities and to all children as a whole. The activities that we have implemented include cooking, dancing, crafts, and physical exercises help them to enjoy and have fun while learning. Having international teachers helps them to see and understand the culture of an outside world. These strengths are not only for our program. This program can be applied in different educational contexts such as afterschool programs.

HN started to see that children are more confident in front of the camera and communicating with foreign teachers. It is remarkable since some of them have anxiety issues talking to others even to Japanese.

Also, HN has seen a child with autism able to communicate with teachers and celebrating saying やったー! [Yatta! I did it!] and doing high five with the on-site teacher. In particular, this child is less motivated and spends his time laying down and keeps looking at his hand spinning. These are quite typical gestures for people with autism.

To develop the contents of the program HN, TS and JH had meetings to coordinate the contents of the program regarding the level of children, the availability of time and the staff. They established the Eiken exam as a goal to motivate children and their parents. Thus, children and parents can see the results of the program taking an exam as a goal.

For the content of online lessons, Athena and LOs teachers adjust the program according to children's needs, and provide an original program with a grammar structure, an activity or game, and a worksheet. For children who are beginners, the idea is not to make them feel that English time is study time, for them the purpose is to feel that

English time is time for fun. These lessons focus on vocabulary and games emphasizing pronunciation. For children who join on Tuesdays, the purpose is to start learning the basics of English structure and also enjoy an activity and a worksheet. Finally, for children on Thursdays who are the ones with the higher level, the purpose is to focus on the Eiken exam. Therefore, the content and structures are more advanced than the other lessons.

During the program, online lessons had some challenges due to the distance of the teacher. In order to make children feel a connection with the teacher, organizers consider the importance of asking one by one questions calling children by their names. For this reason, before starting each lesson, Athena teachers require the names of the participants of the day to the LOs teachers. In the end, teachers ask children to present their worksheets to the teacher through the screen. Children have shown more connection with the teacher's thanks to this.

For the length of the program, after receiving parents' feedback, organizers found that the valuable content has not been not seen totally by parents. Organizers are willing to spread the program but it has some limitations in the promotion of the program. Meanwhile, both organizations are strengthening the team and the contents of the program in order to expand it.

This project between Athena and Little Oranges focused on teaching the proper pronunciation of English. It helps children to feel confident and increase their self-esteem. For all learners, it is very important, especially with children with developmental disabilities because they can feel that language abilities give them an opportunity to receive prizes or be recognized at the school for their own abilities.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the collaboration program of English from Athena Eikaiwa and Little Oranges in international education for youth development has demonstrated positive effects to promote the development of language in children with developmental disabilities. Children's changes in their ways of learning, and acting and parents' opinion showed the inclusion of the English program as an effective tool for language development.

During the program, children not only learn English but also have English as an experience to communicate with international teachers from different countries and nationalities. Therefore, they

have the opportunity to use English as a tool to connect with people from other countries.

As part of the collaboration program, the proper pronunciation of English showed that students felt confident, and their self-esteem increased. This is very important for all learners, however, in children with developmental disabilities it is very important for children because they can feel their language abilities give them chances to be recognized in schools for receiving prizes.

Access to online tools has been a challenge in education, however, in language education, there are online resources that improve the quality of the lessons and make them more attractive for learners. For this reason, learners from this program have demonstrated to be enjoying the learning experience.

Despite there are still doubts coming from the lack of knowledge about the idea of learning from a native speaker, it is possible to make a team with qualified staff able to teach without being native speakers. However, constant training is important to maintain high standards and quality. Thus, even the teachers who are not native speakers can become “certified teachers with native level” Also, it provides opportunities for children to see that regardless of the country English is a tool that can connect them with people from different countries.

Recommendations

English education, as a tool for youth development in children with developmental disorder has to be constantly tracking and updating. The program needs to adapt to the learner's needs. For this reason, the coordinator's role is very important to follow the teachers' lessons and keep motivated not only the learners but also the working team.

At the time of recruiting teachers, regardless of nationality, it is important to consider the accent and level of English of teachers not to be an obstacle that affects the learners. Students will learn that there are different types of accents in English used around the world, however, it should not be an obstacle at the time of learning.

For non-profit organisations, NPOs, or voluntary organizations, it is very important to keep the team motivated. There are some volunteers contributing and despite the program's aim to be accessible to participants, and to work with qualified staff it is important also to be able to recognize their work and keep them motivated.

Although there are some issues with English

education in Japan, this is an opportunity for projects like Little Oranges and Athena to collaborate and demonstrate other ways of learning a language.

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JoAnn Hayashi is a TESOL teacher. She started to teach English in a sports academy in Japan. Following this, she decided to work with Active Life. Active Life strives to create an effective curriculum that engages both young learners and adults. JoAnn as co-founder of Athena Languages and English coordinator, is in charge of hiring and guiding teachers in order to maintain the program's quality. She is also promoting Japanese culture to the Philippine population in order to improve cultural understanding.

Karen Pullupaxi is an Olympic Studies master's student. She is an architect and a national kendo player. Her love of sports and architecture led her to Japan to research urban planning for community development through sports. She works as an English and Spanish instructor with elementary school pupils and young adults. She is the assistant coordinator in Active Life.



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Outside the Box: A Multi-Lingual Forum A Couple More Things ...

Visitors to the *OTB Forum* webpages and readers of the journal might be curious about the imagery employed. Allow us to explain.

Why is forum used in the title of this journal? We envisioned this journal as a meeting place that would welcome viewpoints from various people and quarters and in various languages. In history, the word forum referred to an open square which served as the center of business and public discussion; the etymology of forum is the Latin *foris*, "outside." Of course, the Roman Forum (*Forum Romanum*) was such a center of commerce and government.

Why a column? As the reader may have noticed in the issue in your hand or on the screen, the *OTB Forum* employs this image of a column quite often. This image is of the top third of a large column located quite near the Foreign Language Center (now the Center for Global Communication) at the University of Tsukuba, where the *OTB Forum* originated.

The column is in the Corinthian style, the latest of three main Greco-Roman column styles: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. Corinthian columns were used to support temples and other important public buildings. They were erected to celebrate victories in military campaigns and to commemorate posthumously the greatness of certain emperors such as Trajan.

The scrolls found at each corner of Corinthian columns were a key symbol of civilization for the Romans. They signify respect for the written word and its facility to convey law, history, and other information. These columns were also used to separate areas of different religious importance, such as each god's alcove in the Roman Pantheon. Hence, their use in the *OTB Forum* as a border between different sections is intended as a continuation of a time-honored tradition, albeit only for literary purposes. (See http://www.ehow.com/about_6570954_symbolism-roman-columns.html for an excellent explanation of Roman columns and symbolism, and a photograph of the interior of the Pantheon with its Corinthian columns can be viewed at <http://www.trekearth.com/gallery/photo1114648.htm>.)

On some of the pages of the *OTB Forum* webpage, you will find a gray brick background. This refers to the roads built by the Roman Empire.

Finally, **the viaduct below** is located in Segovia, Spain. This, too, is a vestige of the Roman Empire (and it makes a fine divider in its current incarnation).



Outside the Box: A Multi-Lingual Forum

Submission Guidelines

These are the categories we've arrived at for the OTB Forum. We encourage submissions in any of these, and we further welcome submissions that do NOT fit these categories—this is, as the name suggests, a forum.

Articles (formerly *Theory and Other Dangerous Things*) is devoted to theoretical issues and academic articles of interest to language teachers and practitioners. Articles in this section undergo double blind peer review; please consult <http://www.otbforum.net> for a detailed explanation of the peer review process.

Language Learning & Teaching deals with classroom advice and tips.

Experiences focuses, as the name suggests, on experiences (!) relevant to language. These can be, of course, as a learner, teacher, or practitioner.

Around the World deals with international topics (i.e., outside Japan), including but not limited to travel, living abroad, and studying abroad. In this category, photographs would be an excellent addition (see Nagata, 2011).

Technology addresses the expanding use of technology in the classroom.

Creative Writing welcomes any type of creative writing: short stories, reflections, poetry, among many other possibilities.

Reviews may address any medium (e.g., books, music, film, theater) and should include ISBN, ISSN, and price information.



Outside the Box: A Multi-Lingual Forum

General Guidelines

In your articles, please adhere to the following general guidelines.

- Submissions should be, in principle, a maximum of about 6000 words in length for academic papers and about 2000 words for all other submissions.
- To make your article as accessible as possible, informative abstracts (containing selected results) in both English and Japanese are encouraged. If the paper is not in English, then an English abstract is strongly suggested.
- Use **Times New Roman** font for Latin-based languages, and use **MS明朝** for Chinese and Japanese.
- The text should be 12-point font.
- Use the **format/paragraph/special indentation/first line** feature to indent paragraphs (please do not use spaces or tabs).
- The *OTB Forum* uses APA style for references. Please consult the latest edition (currently the 7th edition) for details.
- For section headings, please consult past issues for general guidelines. Please note that we do not use numeration (e.g., 1.1, 1.1.1, 2.1) in section headings.
- Figures such as photographs and images are acceptable. The author should provide images and indicate approximately where images should be located in the text (see Davidson, 2010, and Rude & Rupp, 2008).
- Footnotes may be included (e.g., Bode, 2008; Kenny, 2010; Spang, 2019a, 2019b).
- Use of copyrighted material is allowed, but responsibility for obtaining copyright permission lies with the author, not with the OTB Forum.

Call for manuscripts: The next issue of the *OTB Forum* is planned for 2021. Prospective authors are invited to submit manuscripts either via the online link on the OTB Forum publications webpage or by sending an email attachment to **editor@otbforum.net**



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