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Feasibility of Alternative English Instruction — A Case Study of a Hokkaido-based English Camp

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Abstract

This research is a case study analysis of a 2016 Hokkaido English camp for elementary to high school ages. Learning activities were developed with multiple learning goals layered horizontally and vertically, partially under theme of increasing regional tourism. Vertical aims consisted of learning goals placed in layered construction in curriculum, primarily of listening, speaking and grammar skills. Horizontal goals were twofold, first to create understanding of foreign sociocultural norms in communications both situation-specific and general, and second to increase awareness of the utility of English in participants' current and future lives. The main research purpose was to investigate whether a curriculum based on multiple learning theories could support creation of a cohesive, successful English program. Main theoretical underpinnings used in curriculum design and delivery related to experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), cooperative learning (Slavin, 2008), and horizontal and vertical organizational learning (Hasan, 2013). Results coincided with a priori notions that learning is enhanced given a level of emotional satisfaction, and active learning is supported by inclusion of practical skills, especially when each is perceived as meaningful to learners.

Introduction

English has come to be used in hopes for effecting success in Japanese personal and professional advancement. For that reason, Japanese government has set out to facilitate international education policy with various aims, such as “the development of Japanese citizens who can live in the international community” (Aspinall, 2010, p.4). While such an endeavor is logical as well as ideal for a country that is at times perceived as separated from the international community geographically and culturally to the point that Japanese are often considered enigmatic by outside peoples, various limitations impede the actual process. The first and foremost of which is the manner that English is delivered at the compulsory education levels, namely elementary and junior high school.

For Hokkaido, and other regions of Japan that are facing economic constraints in an age where federal government is trying to create self-sustainability on local levels, the recent large increases of inbound tourism have been an impetus for policy initiatives. However, the limited English skills of both Japanese EFL learners and tourism workers leaves much to be desired. As such, the burden of responsibility for bridging the gaps in communication will surely fall on the next, still youthful, generations.

The English Camp in Maple Lodge that serves as the context for data collection for this research took place in a local area of Hokkaido in 2016 over a 2-day period with the cooperation of JTB and two native English instructors. With two objectives that guided this camp: linking business with foreign language education and attracting attention to the present disparity between desirable levels of communication ability with foreigners and the currently unsympathetic conditions for inbound

tourists to Hokkaido. While economic profit was one motivation for program implementation, it was also hoped that a successful program would lead to positive long-term impact on learners and that recurrent or similar English programming to benefit younger students in local Hokkaido areas might follow.

The purpose of this research is to investigate alternative approaches to English instruction, particularly the feasibility of a short-term curriculum for learners across a wide age range in a non-traditional learning environment conducted by foreign instructors whom students have no previous experience with. Although data analysis began officially at the post-program assessment stage, initial development phases included serious consideration for the educational aspects and phenomenon of alternative English programming. It was initially thought that findings from research, which was composed of underlying horizontal and vertical learning aims, might provide an in-depth perspective on the discussion of an ever-evolving landscape of English pedagogy in the domain of EFL education for adolescent learners in Japan.

When deconstructed and viewed in terms of whether traditional methods of instruction actually serve learners in ways that meet aims, not only of progressive learning but from emotional and practical conduciveness, the scenarios and circumstances that are prevalent in EFL pedagogy provide a slate to examine and reconsider which educational approaches are most satisfactory.

Literature Review

A variety of research in the fields of psychology and education have focused on transforming existing levels of learning into a greater

set of knowledge or skill for a broader application (Tanaka & Watanabe, 2015; Harden & Stamper, 1999; Knowles, 1960; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2005). English instructors from elementary through high school levels, and at times in higher education too, often struggle to find content and delivery style that is practical as well as meaningful to students. Large amounts of printed texts equally matched by extensive amount of vocabulary to be tested on are pushed on to students, and speaking ability is often most neglected (Ikegashira, Matsumoto, & Morita, 2009).

A large part of research on English taught as a foreign secondary language includes areas as broad as they are deep, such as English as a foreign language (EFL), English as a lingua franca (ELF), English as a second language (ESL) and more. Despite acceptances amongst scholars in regards to commonalities and differences in perspectives on English education for non-native speakers, the plethora of aspects and intricacies pertinent to language learning curriculum design remain primary consideration (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Transformations, where possible, have been made to accommodate the traditionally missing elements of practicality, knowledge of sociocultural norms and overall more relevant interaction with foreigners who speak English, whether native or non-native English speakers; and have been known to occur specifically at trade schools, super global high schools, and some willing post-secondary institutions. However, in environments of K-12 EFL learning, where vocabulary, text and translation have been traditionally utilized, a more effective integration is needed. According to Sheckley and Bell (2006), it is necessary for instructors to be adept at applying methods that utilize learners' previous experience in a way that problem solving becomes more of an orchestration of consciousness and response rather than simple drill practice; infusing learners'

prior experience into an environment that learners can define learning aims according to their own interpretation of self and situation. Teachers who can conceptualize the learning experience as one of motivation and emotion, especially so that the process moves in a direction towards autonomy and wellness, can engage more positively (Reeve, 2006). Theories that interpret motivation as a tool towards building autonomy often recognize the utility of intrinsic motivation for hopeful outcomes.

To integrate teaching aims in a way conducive to progressive achievement, a new model of viewing and constructing programming is through vertical and horizontal learning. Its efficacy towards balancing the two crucial dimensions, scope of content and sequence, permits the organization and assembling of various subjects for propitious application across a number of similar situations (Hassan, 2013). Towards English coursework, the horizontal dimension can be a collection of topics or subjects either previously learned or to be introduced. In either case, the horizontal topics are placed strategically in order to make connections between subject branches for a new integrative application by students. The vertical dimension is a method of arranging tasks for developing skills in a sequence of building from a lower to higher ability, a concept used in regular K-12 coursework. This approach could be advantageous for EFL programs, helping to arrange learning aims and avert the complexities associated with developing English courses and further raise skills in increments that are measurable as well as visible.

While some have contended that failure of English scholarship is inextricably the result of Japanese teachers facing limitations in ability to teach a language that is structured so lexically and socio-culturally different than that of Japanese, there have been proponents within the

K-12 systems who argue for native English speaking foreigners to be granted responsibility of its approach, form, and delivery (Hosoya, personal communication, 2007). In K-12, whether native English speaking teachers are the ones best apt to design and manage a framework remains a relatively moot point given the rather universal adherence to uniform curricula across respective levels. A study by Huh and Jong (2013) focused on the native English speaking teachers in an English camp carried out in Korea, finding that although the teachers had a positive influence on students' in regards to modeling language in natural communicative ways, they carried relatively little effectiveness in using teaching approaches and methods diverse and impactful enough to build skills in upward and meaningful ways.

As children's expansion of acquired learning and skills is benefited by guidance that tends to their insecurities as well as their capabilities, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) serves as basis from which teaching can be operationalized for clearer inspection and refinement (Chaiklin, 2003). Although detractors of such theories rooted in sociocultural perspective may argue that the child develops either completely or partially from their own innate nature, the environment is a learning terrain to be navigated and adapted to, more often than not by social means of which language plays a major role (Wells, 1999). Vygotsky pointed out the impact of using ZPD as a starting point from which teachers who understand the pre-existing knowledge of learners can discern and mitigate the time and manner to help students for sequential progress, and Bruner first introduced the term scaffolding as "cognitive support given by teachers to learners to help them solve tasks that they would not be able to solve working on their own" (as cited by Fernandez, Wegerif, Mercer, & Drummond, 2008, p.40). These concepts can be applied to effectively nurture language learning as well

as its curricula (Verenikina, 2008).

Although English camps and other short-term projects, intended for youth enjoyment as well as development, do not receive much recognition in literature and their potential remains unrealized, the author recognized the importance of navigating the learning progression by applying theoretical concepts that have been established in studies of learning and psychology.

Method

Participants

During the initial advertising and student registration phases of the Hokkaido English camp, a minimum level of English capability was decided on as an entry requirement. Parents of applicants had to indicate whether their child met one or more of the following criteria: has had some regular previous English study; has attained or attempted Eiken certification; or, were able to demonstrate sincere interest in English and the program itself. Participants resided in various towns and cities across Hokkaido, the specifics of which will remain undisclosed for privacy, many making long trips to participate in the camp at the Iwamizawa City venue.

A minimum age requirement and overall age range was initially set from junior high school first year to high school third year, a decision made in early stages to determine matters of content, level of English to be used, and feasibility of such delivery. After several inquiries by interested parents, especially those of elementary and junior high children, there was a reconsideration to include fifth and sixth-year elementary school students. A total of 11 students registered officially (7 females/4 males), of which 10 actually attended the program.

Regarding age range, 1 student was finishing fifth-year elementary, 5 students were at the end of their sixth-year of elementary schooling, and out the remaining 4 students there was 1 first-year junior high, 2 third-year junior high and 1 first-year high school student respectively. Of the elementary school age group, 2 had attained a Level 4 and 1 Level Pre-2 Eiken, while the remaining 3 had attempted but not yet attained Eiken certification. As for the junior high school age group, 2 had attained Level 3 and 1 had Level 4 Eiken certification; the high school aged student had achieved a Level Pre-2 Eiken certification.

The 2 third-year junior high and 1 high school student were placed in the *Advanced Program* curriculum while the 6 elementary school students and 1 first-year junior high student were placed in the *Beginner Program* curriculum. Despite the perceived feasibility of strictly dividing students into two separate groups with content and levels highly unique for each, a more unified environment and curriculum to promote smooth delivery and cohesion via extensive group work was opted for.

Instrument and Procedure

In curriculum creation phases several approaches and methodologies were included that were considered useful to narrow potential gaps and alleviate barriers that regularly hinder the English as second language learning and teaching processes, and without which the program might have been negatively affected. Various educational theories connected to learners' motivation, emotion and cognitive states were considered during activity design and delivery, particular to ones that facilitate learning by means such as an active conducive learning environment, building rapport amongst students and with teachers,

constructing learning aims in vertical and horizontal fashion (Harden & Stamper, 1999), and enjoyment of educational experience.

In order to ensure efficacy of program and post-program measurement, three objectives - enjoyment/satisfaction, improvement of English skills, and cohesiveness/smoothness of program - were decided upon. Regarding the development of curriculum and materials, an initial plan that attempted to include learning aims that could challenge learners of all levels was later revamped in a structure of two separate curriculum levels, named as Beginner and Advanced; although distinguishable and measurable by specific skill levels, the curriculum kept underlying themes universal and in tact.

Many factors were considered in the development of this program including the specific activities of curricula, the respective English levels and target skills associated, decision-making regarding matters of teaching approaches/teacher roles, time scheduling and technology. However, a complete list and examination of such extends beyond the scope of this study. As such, factors that were not originally intended for measure are not operationalized here. The main theoretical underpinnings aimed at increasing the chances of effectiveness in the program were chosen based on the author's educational background, professional teaching experience and prior curriculum development work, but with particularly focus on and alignment towards elementary, junior high and high school levels.

To measure students' perceptions of the program, which can provide insight into the program's efficacy, attitude surveys were distributed to students on the second final day immediately after program completion. The survey consisted of 5 questions, 4 of which were open-ended or had an additional open-ended question to complement "yes/no" questions to elicit further details. Survey questions

included each of the following, written in similar fashion:

1. *Did you enjoy the English camp?* Yes / No

Why?

2. *How did your English improve compared to your usual English class?*

3. *Did you feel a connection with the material?* Yes / No

4. *Do you think this kind of learning is valuable?* Yes / No

Why?

5. *How did your English improve?*

The students were asked to complete the survey individually without talking and not in proximity with other students. Students were instructed to write in pencil, not to write their names on the survey and to answer honestly regardless of their opinion being ‘good’ or ‘bad’; and were told to ask if they had any questions or could not read the specific terms or expressions or had difficulty deciphering question meanings. Surveys were collected once finished. The results were later inputted in an Excel file to tally the respective responses to each of close-ended responses, and categories were then developed prior to reading answers in attempt to qualitatively and quantitatively determine response patterns. Since open-ended responses were written in Japanese, they were then translated to English for further review. The labels, or categories, were as follows: *sociability factor, learning environment, (native) teaching presence, content/design suitability, emotional satisfaction, perception of English practical value, and internal-value connection.*

The categories used for operationalization of variables were not based on any measures from other English camp case studies, although because the divisions themselves have been documented in various other researches, they were perceived as and deemed suitable by the

author. In cases where language from open-ended responses were considered definitively characteristic of respective label(s), a “determinable” status was allocated to it; alternatively, those not considered definitively characteristic of label but indicating close proximity to label were denoted as “perceivable”. This separation was performed through strict and rigorous checking of answers to place into respective categories when deemed appropriate, and perceivably allowed for the three initial research aims to be measured in relation to the theoretical approaches and methodologies developed during program design stages. A heavy reliance on observation methods and associated observer biases limit the validity of the study, an issue which is further discussed later in this paper.

Results

Enjoyment and satisfaction

Regarding students overall emotional satisfaction or enjoyment, all 10 students responded “yes” to question 1 “Did you enjoy the English camp?” with individual responses varying in language such as “had a predetermined goal so could enjoy lesson more”, “teacher(s) was funny so I could speak assertively”, along with various similarly worded answers relating mainly to the ability to make friends, having fun, and the overall English learning experience. In total response to all questions with open-ended answers, 8 answers were denoted as *determinable* and 8 answers as *perceivable* specific to indication of enjoyment and satisfaction.

Based on qualitative analysis of the responses and teacher reflection of program activities, the preparatory stages that detailed a thorough breakdown of steps and dialogue to be used in first-day morning

introductory activities was determined to be effective in creating a comfortable learning atmosphere. In similar fashion, the duration and depth of preparation of curriculum to construct definitive learning aims for each activity seem to account for responses expressing satisfaction with program goals and overall efficacy. The likability of environment, sometimes specific to the facilities and outside nature scenery, and other times related to characteristics of teachers were mentioned with favor in a number of cases.

There were no negative responses to question 1 or any other question that might indicate a negative feeling or lack of satisfaction. Finally students were perceived, by both teachers and assistant moderator, to have moved from a state of high nervousness to one of ease, at times occurring quickly and in great amount and other times slowly over the duration of the first day of activities. According to further teachers' observations, the arranging of two or three activities that rose in difficulty level of English but were followed with a slight leveling off for a final non-formal evaluation of skills per each cluster proved effective in establishing vertical challenges in a fluid manner conducive to achievability, and thus perhaps more enjoyable to participants.

Improvement of English skills

For this area of measure, prior to camp commencement it was expected that instructors would have to rely only on their own post-program reflection of the vertically progressive aims and activities to arrive at conclusions, particularly due to instructors' assumptions that students' would lack the ability to decipher improvement or be unable to self-reflect on learning to a discernible degree. However, several responses to question 5 "How did your English improve?" indicated the opposite as 9 out of 10 students' responses were of a discernibly reflec-

tive nature by students of the learning experience.

A variety of expressions in a range including “was good to learn using a variety of situations”, “there was time (chance) for contemplating”, “it was all in English” and “could do a presentation in English” were elicited; while more comments along the lines of being able to listen to native (or real) English, being able to understand conversation and communication in English, and being able to speak or improve speaking were found in abundance. Once again, there were no negative responses to question 5 or any other question that might indicate a sentiment expressing lack of skill progression or discontent about the skill types or levels taught. This may indicate that the initial steps to create programming both suitable for improving skill sets as well as being enjoyable for learners was successful.

Under the qualitative analysis of all responses that fell under category of perception of English practical value, 6 answers were denoted as *determinable* and 1 as *perceivable*, which amounted to lowest number of hits for any category tied with teaching presence. The intermittent teacher perceptions of students throughout and over activities seemed to affirm a gradual improvement of English skills related mostly to speaking both for specific learning activity purposes and also socially with teachers, grammar and presentation skills. To a lesser but equally noticeable degree, active listening and active speaking ability seemed to increase as factor of time and exposure to the environment set up and supported via curriculum and strategy.

In regards to the dual curriculum for beginner and advanced levels, there were times when both beginner and advanced groups faced challenges in activities with a focus on vocabulary and sentence building for the topic of Japanese sights, geography and customs. This slowed the pace of the activity, as there were sometimes longer

moments of contemplation, mistakes in choices and what appeared to be frustrations, which despite being expected at various intervals of the program seemed to occur only in that specific activity. This was likely due to anxieties in performance, especially as learners faced challenges in which they had negotiate between knowledge they carried and formulating answers as a team.

Cohesiveness and smoothness of program

There was no particular question on the student survey exclusive to measuring this aspect, yet the category of content/design suitability in classifying open-ended responses gives some insight to student perceptions. Across all open-ended questions, there were numerous responses pertaining to the efficacy or value of content or design adequacy. This category received the second highest amount of *determinable* responses at 28, second only to the internal-value connection category with 33 determinable hits. This latter category, in conjunction with a relatively high determinable hit count on the sociability factor, with 12, and of learning environment, with 11, might suggest a sort of covalence amongst measured variables.

Likewise, the continued efforts to clarify the multiple purposes of learning into the minds of learners early on, followed by a period of rapport building that narrowed the distance between teachers and students, ultimately lead students to trust and commit more fully to the process put before them, a process intricate to the utility of learning contract (Merriam et al, 2005). Further review of materials used by students in activities might also provide a glimpse of the layering of tasks and how horizontal themes and progressive leveling of skills were appropriately included in position to learner's abilities.

Possibly, the previously discussed survey findings in surveys

regarding skills, satisfaction, and learning environment revealed positive sentiment about the programming indicated by responses measured qualitatively, in which learners indicated their perceived value of the learning experience, particularly in contrast to their previous English learning experiences; implying possible agreement by participants over the measures in question. As such, more post-program reflection is necessary at this point. However, given that the aforementioned multi-faceted structure and design did not breakdown in the face of any common or unexpected obstacles, and considering the generally positive responses and performance on behalf of students, the immediate answer appears to be that program was characteristically cohesive and smooth.

Discussion

The program aim by JTB and instructor to produce an English learning experience set apart from traditional classroom and pedagogy was achieved, and especially supported by the convivial location chosen and the establishing of an environment that felt safe for learners to explore new ways, knowledge, and people. The overall indication that students felt enjoyment and/or satisfaction seemed to derive from use of teaching approaches regarded as sound for navigating the second language learning experience despite regularly encountered complications associated with such (Lamb, 2002). As well, teachers' understanding of the psychology of young learners and the society in which they live was considered an essential aspect of preparation. Furthermore, the explanations and exemplifications used by instructors in activities, was seen to be another essential element in sustaining fluidity in delivery and scaffolding progression.

Student participants demonstrated perseverance in a new environment and amongst new people, which in terms of horizontal themes was intricate to developing knowledge and awareness related to socio-cultural norms in relevant English communications and contexts. Learners demonstrated recognition of the importance of context-based English, especially that of promoting hometown sights and historical value, in a manner that was perceived as successful by students and teachers reflections. It is thus believed that the multiple theoretical underpinnings used to facilitate content in both horizontal and vertical extensions was a positive answer to the research question of whether a curriculum based on multiple learning theories relevant to non-traditional English programming and psychological and social tendencies of children in learning environment could support creation of a cohesive, successful English program (Carpendale, 2000; Branford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Olmedo, 2014). Despite perceived constraints in variables as limited timeframe of study, participants of various ages and backgrounds, and lack of prior social connection among participants and instructors, the main objective of providing an enjoyable meaningful learning experience was achieved. Similarly the occurrence of a challenge perceived by students as overly daunting or demanding only arose in one activity out of a total of twenty-six, taking place over 9.5 hours in a two-day span. The design of programming that included activities which required students to sequentially listen, observe, reflect and then perform was deemed successful; particularly due to the fact that teacher-guided instruction was done so in a way that challenged students to challenge themselves autonomously as much as possible. An aspect that was believed to help to establish student-teacher relationship/rapport, which was developed at the early onset stages and that led to active engagement and accomplishment,

perceived as pivotal according to student survey statements.

The overall fluidity of activities both over time and level progression exemplified efficiency of instructor(s) and organizer(s) in areas including but not limited to: time management; activity management; teacher flexibility; rapport building, structured curriculum creation; dedication and adherence to set lesson plan; suitability between content and expectation of skills/knowledge acquisitions related to such; and choice of teaching approaches. Furthermore, the perceived success of this English camp is a testament to the importance of mutually supportive relationships between Japanese and foreign educators to enormous benefits. There appears to be evident advantages to allowing professional educators to take responsible lead in creating and delivering nearly all aspects of this kind of non-traditional English instruction, although to the exact degree it might correlate to the presence of native English speaking teachers remains undeterminable. Whether or not programming can be more easily delivered by and due to the fact that one is a native English instructor who understands the facets of socio-cultural norms and factor in cross-cultural communications is a matter that ought to further explored. It was not believed the postive effect was solely caused by having a native English speaking teacher create and instruct camp, rather, the depth of professional experience in teaching and depth of knowledge of educational theories and their applications were vital to reach the level of success that was attained.

Drawbacks

Drawbacks of the research approach and design concern the rather loose operationalization method, including the categorization of variables used to interpret answers of student survey that was basis of

analysis. As such other more definitive measures could likely be used to determine the reliability of methods and validity of findings of the results found here. By creating an extensive list of approaches concerning pedagogy and learning acquisition to be used in curriculum prior to implementation, it could be possible to recognize their efficiencies in camp use through a more calculated observation method. Similarly, if the inclusive skills and intended skill achievement levels in respective activities were more distinctly set for operationalization beforehand, the degree or amount of learning acquisition based on teacher performance and task performance might be measured in relation to utility of the approaches used. Due to the nature and general purpose of English camps, primarily to give participant a chance to enjoy meeting and socializing with native speakers of English and develop language skills via various communicative contexts, the method of reflective case study was ideal to measure abstract theory in creation of non-traditional, or alternative, English curriculum; yet due to the limited resources of time, number of instructors and researcher biases it remains somewhat unclear as to what degree the measures can be applied in future application.

Other approaches that involve more intricate operationalization processes may illustrate which aspects of alternative English programming are most pivotal, particularly that of native English speaking teacher presence or a thoroughly designed curriculum aimed at meaning-making that is centered on learner emotion and realities. Should the scope of research focus on the selective utility of only one approach rather than multiple ones, for example the advantage of scaffolding, and if pre-program assessment tests along with in-program analyses were carried out to ascertain students' levels for skills in each of the learning aims, a rather accurate comparative analysis could be

performed.

In this study, particularly at its onset, a more precise method of operationalizing variables connected with scaffolding techniques, or vertical aims, and establishing a reference from which to measure learners' ability in the speaking, reading, listening and writing might have produced clearer results for a more articulate image of its outcomes. In such case, a system that is adaptable and suitable for referencing language learners' ability and mapping the progress of learners, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (University of Cambridge, 2011) could be developed and applied.

Uncovering aspects of non-traditional education that carry greater appeal to youth might have a place in the evolving state and policies of Japan's K-12 English. If an adequate amount of official institutional support can be achieved, it might go a long way towards establishing innovative initiatives to enhance or complement traditional K-12 study with alternative programs.

Conclusion

As of 2011, new policies have set the mandate for elementary schools to include English lessons in their curriculums, which has hopefully brought with it more welcoming attitudes and understanding of the primary importance of English in Japanese society. In the Hokkaido region, various cities and towns are faced with a dichotomy between increasing inbound tourism and shrinking of towns due to aging population and outward migration. As such, local areas are taking initiatives to further awareness of various methods of short and long-term stability to local residents. In the case of Iwamizawa, this

included formal proposals such as “Tourism Promotion Vision”, and even direct announcements from city officials at elementary, junior and high school students for increasing student and community awareness of and participation in such projects (Iwamizawa City, 2011).

These efforts are likely to help in the further creation and evolution of English programming outside of K-12 education that serve to provide education not only for practical application but also for a deeper understanding of Western sociocultural norms inherent in communication and to bridge some of the gaps longstanding between Japanese and non-Japanese peoples. It is recommended that if such programming is undergone, it complements existing initiatives and be developed in large part by native English-speaking foreigners with professional backgrounds in education, especially that of teaching, in order to create a curriculum that is theoretically sound as well as practical and effective towards fulfilling stated objectives. Beyond instruction of basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar, a focus on actual communication ability is also pivotal.

It appears necessary to reconsider approach and delivery prevalent at the early grades of compulsory education to better align with policy objectives such as those stated in 2003 initiatives on EFL in Japan (MEXT, 2003), which were written and intended for EFL programming in K-12 institutions. Adjusting curriculum design to include teaching methods that are not traditionally prevalent in Japanese education could promote active learning, cohesive rapport amongst learners, and include a variety of activities that foster a genuine understanding of socio-cultural differences with foreigners. In this study, the positive attitudes of participants towards English learning may have also been associated with single or multiple factors apart from extrapolated results, including but not limited to the education policy shift emphasiz-

ing increased teacher training and “*Gaikokugo Katsudou*” (Foreign Language Activities) that aim to cultivate experienced-based understanding as opposed to traditional methods of translation and rote memory drills (Ibayan & Ishizuka, 2015). For regions more heavily rural such as Hokkaido, a general increase in exposure to English particularly via media and the Internet which permit meaning making via narratives of foreign cultures as well as target language acquisition (Haworth, Turner & Whiteley, 2003), and promoting awareness of inbound tourism that directly impact those areas and people are also indispensable tools.

Finally, another important finding that can be taken from this study is that various learning themes in conjunction with multiple teaching approaches can be utilized for practical, meaningful skill and knowledge acquisition. Thematic learning served as a context from which the competencies were taught, especially as instructors provided rationalization for learners to acquire and apply these skills in daily and future situations. The scaffolding structure was pivotal for the progressive learning that took place in stages over the duration of camp, and might be utilized to some degree in other settings and timeframes of EFL programming with integrity. With great potential for application, especially with inclusion of activities that can be enjoyed by younger learners, broad possibilities are open for consideration at the K-12 level. It will indeed be the will of educators who take interest and aim in expanding pedagogical approaches to EFL that become the guiding force in the future of the field.

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