

Teaching English Writing Skills from a Generative Learning Approach : An Initial Survey of Learner Values

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ジェネラティブな学習方式による英作文技能教育 ——学生の価値観に関する初期調査——

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要 旨

本論文では、比較文化的コンテキストが教育に及ぼす影響を検証することを目的とする。とくに、学生の価値感の形成、授業内容、比較文化的コンテキストにいかに関与する教育理論が適応されるかを検証するという長期的な目的のもとにコースデザインを考察していく。スキルの訓練のみを目指すのではなく、スキルと内容を組み合わせたシラバスの開発を検討する。本論文のテーマは、日本の大学生にライティングを指導する際、スキル重視から内容に重きをおいたアプローチに移行することにより、学生のモチベーション、英語運用能力、その他のパフォーマンスを向上させることが可能である、というものである。

Key Words

English Writing Skills, Generative Teaching Theory, Transformative Learning, Learner Values

ment as the behaviour of a non-linear, self-organising, dynamic system... (Schaverien, 2007: 1467)

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Research Methods
4. Analysis and Findings
5. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Thelen and Smith (1994) are arguing that development is complex, context specific and emergent, rather than being simple, automatically generalizable over different contexts and pre-ordained. What needs to be explained in their view is not stability but novelty and change. To this end they have proposed treating human develop-

In this paper, I aim to investigate what effect cross-cultural context may have on teaching, specifically in defining learners' values and so course content and design with the longer-term aim of seeing how generative teaching theories might be applied in a cross-cultural context. My main focus is on developing tertiary-level writing syllabi that combine skills and content, rather than simply focusing on skills. The thesis of this paper is that it is possible to improve motivation, application and performance among Japanese writing students by moving from a skills-based to a content-focused approach. In testing this thesis, generative learning theories which place an emphasis on the importance of learners' 'values' and the development of 'learning communities', and transformative learn-

ing theories, where 'meaning perspectives' may be overturned and transformed, will be incorporated. The main research questions this paper focuses on are: in what way might students' awareness of cultural differences between Japanese and English styles of writing and argument formation obstruct or be activated (1) to improve student motivation, application and performance, (2) to build dynamic learning communities, (3) to facilitate transformative learning experiences. As such, ascertaining students' motivation and assessment of writing skills in the context of the three other main language skills, needs to be assessed.

The overall justification for this research project is to develop English writing syllabi that best use the context and content of the course to motivate learners. The project is not only to further the development of comparatively new theories in generative learning by placing them in terms of cross-cultural communication, but to attempt a synthesis with transformative learning theories. Ideally, the research will lead to the writing, testing and improvement of English writing syllabi that would then be of practical and ongoing use. This first paper examines the results of a pilot study that combines questionnaires, focus groups and interviews to assess student motivation and values, and the student awareness of the impact of cross-cultural context on their learning experience. It is the first part an ongoing research project.

2 . Literature review

At a theoretical level, this research project looks toward the possible synthesis of a generative theory of learning and Mezirow's ideas of transformative learning in the context of developing cross-cultural learning communities. There appears to be overlap and room for engagement in the determination of transformative learning as gradual and epochal (Mezirow, 2000 : 21), and the nature of dynamic systems as applied to Education theory (see Thelen and Smith, 1994). Drawing on the theory of dynamic systems, which sees such systems operating in terms of gradual and phase shifts, there are

immediate parallels to how transformative learning is described, and it may be possible to draw some of the ideas from transformative learning into developing approaches to generative learning, wherein the values assigned to (or at least discussed within the learning experience) are consciously engaged as transformative.

Mezirow (2000) proposes that through transformative learning 'habits of mind', 'frames of reference', 'meaning perspectives' may be overturned and transformed through learning opportunities. The possibility afforded by transformative learning in many ways appears to mirror some part of what generative learning offers, such as the development from 'black-and-white perceptions of the world to complex relativistic perceptions' (Cranton, 2006 : 29). As Harre notes, 'instead of the ladder of stages we have come to see development as a complex weave of skills and capacity to manage the application of skills' (42). In this combination, learners/teachers would be able to examine the interplay of experiential and cultural influences on development and learning.

The cross-cultural context presents an ideal opportunity for engaging learning as transformative and generative, of generating, testing and regenerating syllabi and values that place both student and teacher clearly into a shared community as learners, and that offer possibilities of both gradual and perhaps epochal transformation within that learning community for the participants, as 'meaning perspectives' and 'values' are placed into an 'open system' (Thelen & Smith, 53). The cross-cultural context itself may present opportunities wherein learners face the sort of 'disorientating dilemma' Mezirow speaks of (2000 : 22), or create an experience of complexity such as presented in dynamic systems where 'the system [ie in this instance, the learning opportunity or perhaps 'event'] can interact in nonlinear and nonhomogenous ways' and form a 'dissipative dynamic' (Thelen and Smith : 53), locally organized and productive while being placed outside of equilibrium. The correlation of transformative and generative approaches to learn-

ing might be productive, allowing the conceptual basis of one to underwrite the procedural basis of the other. At very least, the layering of these theories deepens the complexity and productivity of both, allowing for a broader range of 'possible futures' (Schaverien, 1999 : 1233) within the learning opportunity.

3 . Research Methods

It is apparent that central to generative learning theory is the need for qualitative analysis of learning structures through the application of a generating-testing-regenerating heuristic, wherein the governing values, needs and desires of a cohort are established and tested from the outset through to the end of a particular course. The dynamism of the learning community, noted above, may in fact be encouraged through such testing, as learners are asked to question the basis of their learning experience, the nature of classroom interactions, and their cross-cultural context. As such, the methodology for this current project follows the g-t-r heuristic of generative learning theory. The overall approach to the development of new syllabi can be seen in terms of grounded theory, in that while it uses the g-t-r heuristic of generative learning, it is also exploring theories which have previously not engaged with cross-cultural contexts while also focusing on 'human interaction', incorporating participants' points of view in the effort to understand the degree to which the cross-cultural context might best be engaged to learners' advantage. The research project as a whole will apply the 'adopt and adapt' (Denscombe : 89) approach of grounded theory with the aim of developing new strands to generative learning theories. This is a first pilot and subsequent to the findings of this first effort of testing syllabi, new syllabi will be generated as per the g-t-r heuristic.

The sample group was selected along a combination of convenience and purposive lines, consisting of the entire group of writing students currently being taught by the researcher over six classes. The group consists as a whole of 121 Japanese uni-

versity students at a university in Japan, aged between 18 and 20, in their first and second years of study in a social sciences degree. Within the group there are 69 females and 52 males. The English ability of the group ranges from a TOEFL score of 457 to 593, with the mean being 498 and the median of 513. From this larger sample, a smaller sample of questionnaire responses was selected randomly. As the students are currently being taught writing and research skills by the researcher the relevance of the sample group is apparent and allows for the development of the research project along grounded theory and generative learning principles. Students are also pursuing research in their other subjects wherein cross-cultural content forms a focus, reinforcing the relevance and applicability of this investigation to their interests and values. The random selection of a smaller sample of fifty responses was premised on the manageability of data collected in the short-time space allowed for this project and to afford a cross-section of the larger sample that would provide generalisable data.

The research methodology incorporated questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and a follow-up questionnaire in the following way :

- (1) Questionnaire : an initial questionnaire is given to ascertain students' :
 - a. motivation to learn and assessment of the difficulty and usefulness of learning the four major skill sets of reading, writing, listening and speaking ;
 - b. sense of difference between the usage of English and Japanese ;
 - c. awareness of cross-cultural factors in writing, research and world-view.

The questionnaire used a variety of open and closed questions, combining 7 point Linkert scale questions, Agree/Disagree questions, option questions and rank order questions, as well as allowing respondents space to offer more open-ended answers to each section so as to avoid respondent frustration to pre-coded answering while also al-

lowing for the collection of data that could be examined from a qualitative perspective, in conjunction with the quantifiable data.

- (2) Focus groups : after a four week gap, students were gathered into focus groups and asked to report on their understanding of cross-cultural communication and its challenges with particular reference to English and Japanese. Students interviewed one or two other students, using self-assigned questions under the rubric of 'Challenges in Cross-Cultural Communication for Young Japanese.' Each student then wrote up and submitted a summary of their findings. This generated some 100 or so pages of data.
- (3) Interviews : five subsequent short one-to-one semi-structured interviews (see Fig. 8 for interview questions and Appendix 3 for responses) were conducted with students from the sample group to further assess their awareness and interpretation of the effect and importance of cross-cultural flows in their development of research, writing and argumentation skills, and any shifts in understanding since the commencement of the course. Five students were selected from the larger sample group, three of who had lived for extended periods in an English-speaking country, and two of whom had not.
- (4) Follow-up Questionnaire : at the end of the research project, a short follow-up questionnaire was distributed to the group to triangulate initial findings of skills rankings.

These methods were particularly suited to the context of the research project as the respondents are participating in the courses to which the g-t-r heuristic will apply, and so it is their values and needs that must shape the regeneration stage. They were suitable in terms of convenience, applicability and relevance, and had the added advantage of forming a working example of primary research in the context of the research part of the

course, so that students were both participating in and learning about research, adding to the dynamism and communal nature of the experience. That said, students were provided with the option of non-participation should they choose (as reflected by the non-response rate noted above) without threat of penalty, thereby meeting the ethical criteria of voluntary participation.

4 . Analysis and Findings

(1) Questionnaires

In the initial survey there was approximately a 9% non-response rate to questionnaires, leaving a 91% participation rate, signaling the applicability of findings to the learning group. Of the questionnaires completed, responses to closed questions were with few exceptions complete, while responses to open questions were limited, with students often choosing not to complete. This may have been a result of the brevity of time allowed for the completion of the questionnaire and its length. As an initial survey of students' assessment of motivation, skills, and cross-cultural awareness, the length of the questionnaire was necessary, but subsequent questionnaires as the research project continues to follow the g-t-r heuristic should be kept to a more manageable size in terms of time constraints. On completion of the questionnaires, the data was coded and categorized. Quantitative data from the closed questions was correlated, trends noted and the results graphed for analysis and comparison. Answers to open questions were catalogued and coded, with themes to each answer being codified and the answers categorized according to themes (see Appendix 1).

Section 1: Skills Students were asked to rank the four major English skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing) on a Linkert Scale of 1-7 in terms of Difficulty, Usefulness and Motivation. In the first questionnaire, these rankings were non-exclusive (students could if they chose rank each skill equally in terms of the variants, Fig. 1-3). This at first appeared a fault in the design of the

questionnaire but on further consideration once combined with a follow-up questionnaire where students were asked to rank the skills comparatively (ie one being least difficult, useful etc in terms of the other, see Appendix 2, Fig. 6 & 7), the combination of data allowed for triangulation of results and more general insight into students' overall estimation of skills on individual and comparative levels. In terms of the separate skills, there was an apparent tendency to view speaking skills as difficult to acquire, with the other skills being relatively evenly distributed across the scale (Fig. 1). Significantly, the results showed among the four skills Speaking was deemed both highly difficult (Fig. 1 & 9) and highly useful (Fig. 2, 5 & 10) whether students were ranking on a comparative of non-comparative level. In the first questionnaire, there was an overall tendency to view skills as useful (Fig. 2) while the sense of the difficulty of the learning the skills was distributed across the range (Fig. 1). Students tended overall towards being motivated (Fig. 3). In terms of usefulness, writing was rated significantly lower than the other skills (Fig. 2). While there was a slightly higher ranking of speaking skills in terms of motivation, motivation was fairly evenly distributed across the scale (Fig. 3). The perhaps most significant findings were the emphasis placed on Speaking skills (Fig. 5) and the overall high level of motivation reported by students. Student responses to Writing skills were moderate, tending toward the middle-higher range of the scale (clustered around 5-6) for Difficulty, Usefulness and Motivation (Fig. 4).

Section 2 and 3: Writing Skills and Cultural difference Due to the length of this paper I have set aside data from the first three sections of Section 2 and concentrated on the data gathered in responses to the closed questions of sections 2 D and Section 3, in addition to the open questions. As noted above, whereas students tended to respond well to closed questions (approximately 97% response rate), open questions received a much lower response rate (approximately 38% response rate).

Fig. 1 Skills in terms of difficulty (non-exclusive)

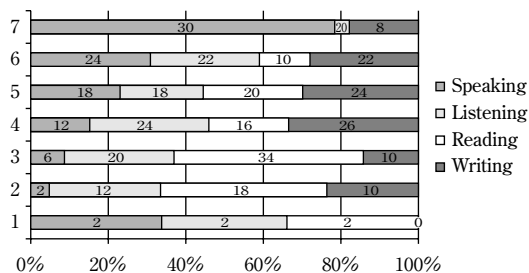


Fig. 2 Skills in terms of usefulness (non-exclusive)

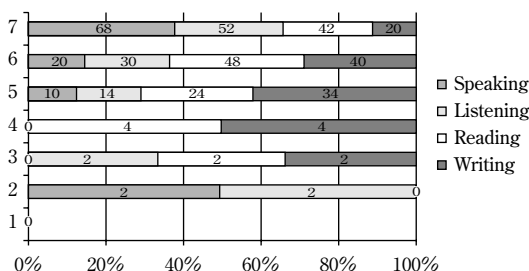
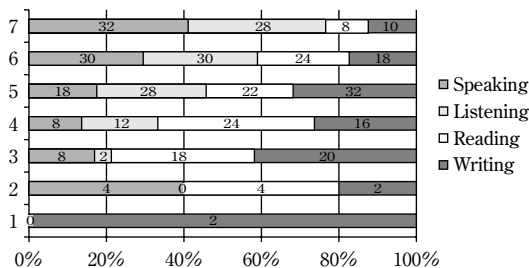


Fig. 3 Skills in terms of motivation (non-exclusive)



In section 2D and section 3, students were asked to assess the influence of linguistic and cultural background on their ability to form arguments, self-expression and consider their culture and foreign cultures. In each category there was a significant trend toward reliance on Japanese over English and an estimation that the strength, logic and interest of an argument were higher in Japanese than English (See Fig. 6). Equally, students noted that their sense of freedom of expression and the ability to express emotion were also higher in Japanese than English. These findings are not immediately validated by the answers to the open questions in this section, a portion of which empha-

Fig. 4 Rankings for Writing

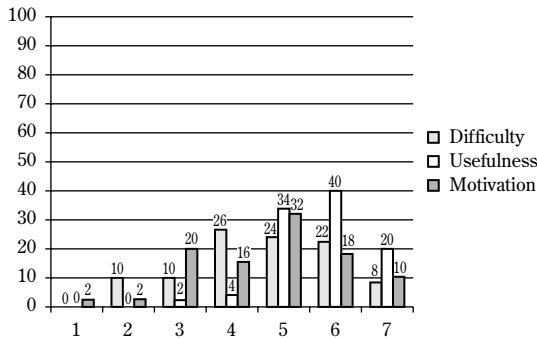
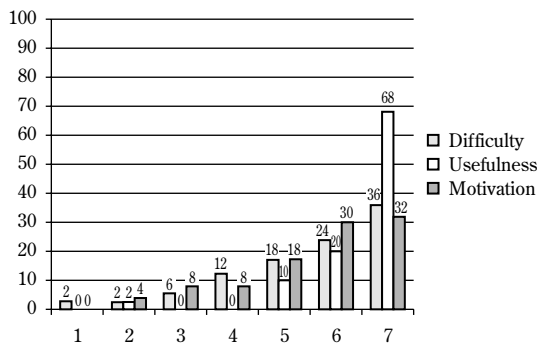


Fig. 5 Rankings for Speaking



sized the directness and simplicity of stating an argument in English as opposed to Japanese (see Section 2B and 2C, Appendix 1). When considered in relation to the non-response rate to open questions, it could be argued that it is in fact the high degree of non-response rates to open questions that validate the above findings. In terms of research, there was a significant shift, in that the majority of students (62%) preferred researching in both English and Japanese. A majority of students (62%) also answered that they preferred to carry out research alone (32% preferred group research, 6% were undecided).

Overall, the responses to Section 3, Questions 1–10 (Fig. 7), show that a majority of students feel the cultural background does have an effect on how people think (Q1). While the majority believe that there are important differences in English and Japanese expression (Q2), a significant portion of them do not believe they need to adjust the way

they think in order to write in English. A small majority believed that a person cannot understand another culture without knowing the language whether it is English or Japanese (Q4 & Q5). While a significant majority (70%) considered Japanese culture is fundamentally different to English-language cultures, interestingly an even larger majority (86%) believed that by learning English they would be better able to understand their own culture. The sample group was approximately divided on whether they felt 'different' when they used English, while a significant majority (80%) felt English had changed their understanding of the world, and an even larger majority felt empowered by learning English (86%).

Answers to the open questions in Sections 1, 2 and 3, substantiated an overall positive attitude to learning English in terms of (1) the ability to construct clear and logical arguments and (2) the sense of empowerment and expansion of worldview through using English. Recognition of fundamental differences between Japanese and English were noted with particular emphasis on difficulties associated with grammar and vocabulary (See 'Grammar and Vocab', Section 2, Appendix 1). Vocabulary-building was a recurrent theme in many responses, at times viewed as difficult but largely viewed as very positive and key. Students enjoyed expanding their lexicon as it expanded their abilities to communicate in English. Overall, there was an apparent emphasis on speaking as opposed to other skills. Argument formation was divided between difficulties with form (vocabulary, sentence structure and paragraph structure) and content (which in turn was often attributed to limitations in lexicon). There was a tendency to view English as more 'direct' and 'simple' than Japanese, in contradiction to the findings noted above, but this was also at times seen as a negative, as some students noted the 'subtleness' and 'delicacy' of Japanese argumentation in a positive light. Similarly, some students noted the lack of 'honorifics' in English and the 'insistence' of English over the 'ambiguity' and 'indirectness' of Japanese. Appropriately, the re-

Fig. 6 Responses to Section 2 D (in percentiles). Student assessment of Argument formation in English and Japanese.

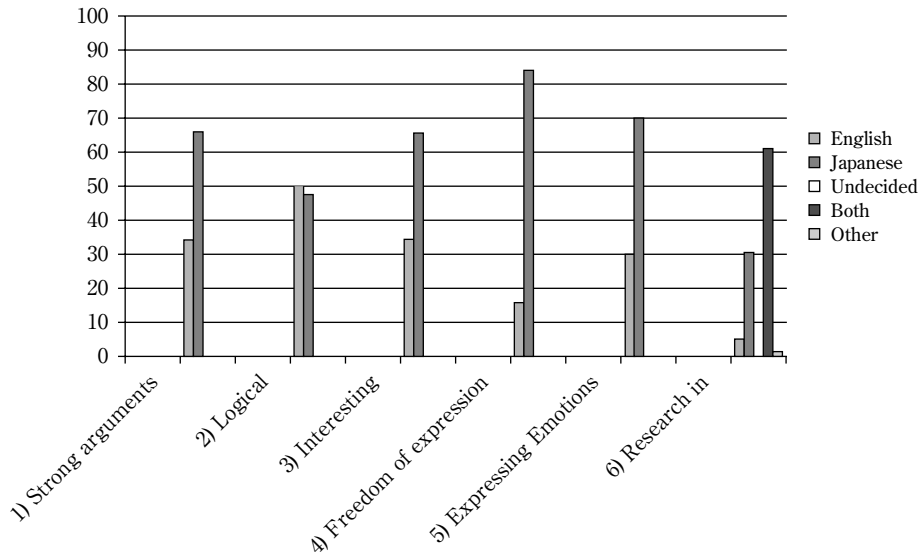
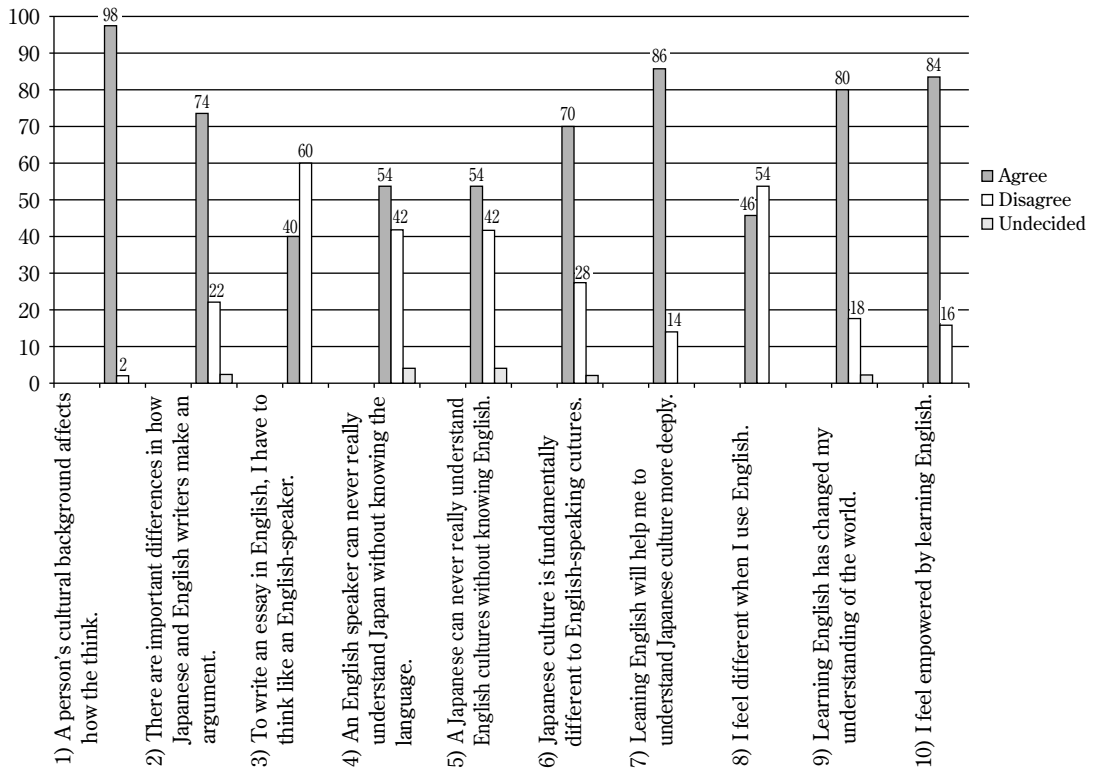


Fig. 7 Responses to Section 3, Questions 1-10 (figures given in percentiles)



spondents did not then offer a value judgment on the difference, perhaps preferring said ambiguity and indirectness. There were frequent references to 'translating' from Japanese to English, suggesting that even among the students happy to answer open questions in English there was a preponderance on translation over working wholly in English. There were frequent positive references to the use of English, especially spoken English (as per the above findings), as being enjoyable and empowering.

(2) Focus group results : 'Challenges in Cross-Cultural Communication for Young Japanese.'

The entire sample group of 121 students was organized into smaller groups consisting of pairs or groups of three, and asked to interview each other on challenges in cross-cultural communication for young Japanese. Students were asked to pose five questions about the topic to their partner/s and then submit a written report. The interview questions were written by the students. Interviews were semi-structured and so students were able to ask further questions and enter into more general discussions. The students' written reports reflect the degree to which students conversed, and present both the thoughts of the interviewee and the interviewer. The reports consistently noted the following factors as key to cross-cultural communication :

① Language was central to cross-cultural communication and in the current period English is the dominant, 'common' or 'official' international language. Many students noted that when speaking to non-Japanese, English was the language of choice regardless of whether the other speaker was from an English-speaking background. All students in the sample group study at least one other foreign language, but even so only a small percentage (approximately 8%) noted a tendency to use a foreign language other than English in cross-cultural communication.

② Many students reported that a key difficulty in cross-cultural communication was a 'hesitancy' to engage with foreigners due to a fear of making grammatical errors or a lack of vocabulary ('proper word'). This was attributed to : (a) national characteristics of shyness, fear of shame ; (b) the emphasis in secondary school English courses of writing and reading over spoken English ; (c) 'little chance' to speak to foreigners in Japan. 'Hesitancy' was repeatedly attributed to 'risks of leading [to] misunderstanding' due to a misuse of language.

③ A key and common positive association with cross-cultural communication was an emphasis on 'curiosity' that in turn related to a 'broaden of horizons'. These terms were repeated in various reports throughout the sample.

④ Several, though not a proportionally significant number (12%), noted that cross-cultural communication was not predicated on ethnicity or national identification, concluding that they often had as much difficulty understanding other Japanese as non-Japanese. These responses tended to come from respondents who had lived outside of Japan for extended periods. In addition, these responses were commented on as 'interesting' or 'surprising' by their Japanese interviewers who had not lived out of Japan for long periods.

⑤ There were recurrent references in many of the reports of the possibility of relying on non-verbal modes of communication (such as 'games', 'drawing', 'facial expressions', 'gestures') to engage in cross-cultural communication.

A small number of reports noted that some students felt it was never possible to fully communicate with non-Japanese as the cultural differences were too great. Others noted that negative assumptions about Japan or strong religious sentiments obstructed cross-cultural communication.

(3) Short interviews

Five students were selected for short interviews. Of the five selected, four agreed to the interview. Each interviewee was asked the same three questions (see Fig. 8). In response to Q1, interviewees 'A' and 'B' noted that their motivation to learn writing skills in English is related to their future career ambitions. 'C' and 'D' responded with more specific reference to language skills, focusing on form (vocabulary and referencing) over the application of skills. In response to Q2, there was a negative tendency. Both 'C' and 'D' noted working in English made them 'uncomfortable', while 'A' noted both negative ('stress') and positive affects to motivation. 'B' was alone in noting the overall experience was a positive one. In response to Q3, 'A', 'C' and 'D' all offered positive responses, noting that the cross-cultural context of their studies has meant they have a broader understanding of the world. 'A' and 'D' both contextualised this understanding in terms of experiences outside Japan that have allowed a comparative basis for understanding their own culture. Both 'C' and 'D' noted the experience of reading in English as key to broadening their world-view. 'B' chose not to respond. None of the interviewees were able to note a transformative moment in their studies, instead signaling that the process was gradual and accumulative.

(4) Follow-up questionnaire: (Results please see Appendix 2). These results were used to triangulate results from the first questionnaire and the interview/focus group research with specific regard to student rankings of difficulty and usefulness. In both instances, Speaking skills were ranked highest. Sixty-eight percent of respondents noted 'being able to express themselves clearly' was their main aim.

5 . Conclusion

This initial study has generated useful data on students' values, motivation and difficulties. First, there is an overall emphasis and enthusiasm among students for speaking skills over writing

Fig. 8 Interview questions

Q1) Over the last few semesters we have been learning about writing and research methods in English. What most motivates you in your study of English writing skills?

Q2) Does the cross-cultural nature of your study (ie working in two languages, researching in two languages, and researching other cultures through English and Japanese, following arguments from English writers) affect your motivation in anyway? Is it positive or negative and why?

Q3) Does working across cultures and languages change your basic outlook on the world at all? Has your outlook ever changed significantly due to being able to work in English and Japanese? Have there been any key, perhaps even dramatic moments (the Eureka! moment) where because of your study and abilities in English and Japanese you have felt changed or felt your view of the world significantly changed?

skills, as triangulated by data from all inquiries and clearly stated in the final follow-up questionnaire. The researcher had not expected this at the outset of the project. The data supports the idea of increasing course components related to discussion and debate centered on topic and argument generation for written projects, drafting and editing, and presentation of research, so as to improve overall motivation within the course. Secondly, data gathered supported the understanding that writing students find skills related to form (grammar and vocabulary) more difficult than those related to content (topics and argument). This supports the premise of designing courses that orientate students' focus toward content, while developing skills in form as a secondary, supporting condition. Grammar and vocabulary are not to be ignored but to be developed in the context of giving students greater freedom and ability to express content, rather than being the focus of the syllabi itself in order to increase motivation and application. In ad-

dition, vocabulary-building was a frequent reference point for many students, both in terms of difficulty and as fundamental to developing expression and fluency, and allowing for nuance in their writing. As such, syllabi should be developed with vocabulary-building as an important though not focal point. Linking vocabulary exercises with discussion and content development should facilitate greater motivation and engagement, while also addressing one of the key difficulties noted by students. In addition, it would be appropriate for writing teachers to show students good cause as to the importance of writing skills (towards this, syllabi might incorporate practical aspects of writing such as business letters/emails, curriculum vitae, grant and job applications, blogs and online community development and so on; and more positively create avenues for students to see their work into publication by-way of student-run publications, either in class or across Faculty/ University contexts).

In terms of the use of the cross-cultural context in teaching writing, the data yielded insights into student values and concerns. While English logic and argumentation were generally conceived as simple and direct in comparison to Japanese logic and argumentation, and while there were many responses in which the cross-cultural context was seen as positive, 'broadening horizons' and where English proficiency itself was acknowledged as key to success in the globalised world, there was an overall trend to answers that suggested the students felt English lacked in terms of nuance and subtlety in argument, and where the simplicity and forthrightness of English argumentation was at odds culturally to students' sensibility. As such, syllabi should be developed with greater sensitivity to these cultural differences, so that the cultural difference might be examined within classes, through discussion and written exercises, and students encouraged to aim to develop writing styles that where possible and appropriate hybridize Japanese and English writing and argumentation styles.

Finally, the data gathered showed students moti-

vation and sense of difficulty was most affected by a 'shyness' and 'lack of confidence' related to making errors in English usage. This was also coupled with evidence that most students across the range of the sample group are still approaching writing skills from the perspective of translation. To start to remedy this, greater classroom discussions and increased vocabulary-building through reading tasks might be incorporated, while within the context of the classroom it should be stressed that students remain in English and do not code-switch in an effort to edge them toward the point where they might operate fully in English rather than translating from Japanese. The reason for this should be stressed to students and discussed. Furthermore, students might be encouraged to practice modeling exercises based on reading texts used for vocabulary-building.

With regard to transformative learning, students showed that on the whole their English studies had not allowed for any such experiences and that by nature they viewed any changes facilitated by learning English as gradual and accumulative. Students stressed the centrality of speaking skills in their experience of cross-cultural communication, though there was a recognition noted in the interviews that written texts had also played a part. As such, syllabi might seek to create exercises that combined discussions with set texts tied to students' more general research interests, and consciously seek to set texts that will challenge ideas established either in Japanese popular media or international popular media. Drawing in comparative analysis of Japanese and Western texts on social issues may lead to greater chances of the transformative experiences Mezirow discussed.

In terms of generative learning, the data showed that there was a surprising homogeneity to student values in terms of skill sets and the overall trend toward hesitancy in using English. That said, this homogeneity does not translate to seeing the cohort as a learning community, as the same 'hesitancy' also appears to affect student interactions with each other, and the majority of students sig-

naled a preference for solitary work rather than group work. This perhaps poses the greatest obstacle to developing dynamic learning communities, and the application of generative learning concepts in a Japanese context. There are various cultural differences in the Japanese conception of community and social interaction that need to be taken into account while pursuing generative learning theories.

Overall, this research project is only a preliminary examination of a very broad and complex subject. It has established a number of areas where the current syllabi used by the researcher can be developed to improve student motivation, and also where cultural difference and context has the strongest impact on learning. As such, it provides data on which to regenerate syllabi according to the g-t-r heuristic and suggests several strategies to pursue. In terms of the further development of generative and transformative learning theories in a cross-cultural context, more careful consideration of specific cultural differences needs to be undertaken. This next step in the research project would be most profitably undertaken in discussion and collaboration with students, incorporating the comparative analysis of cultural determinants in logic and argument within the writing course itself, a strategy which may provide transformative experiences for learners (students and teacher alike) and further facilitate student motivation to use English skills and to view such skills not in terms of linguistic imperialism but empowerment.

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Appendix 1 : Qualitative data results from Questionnaire 1

Section 2	
Grammar and vocabulary	<p>I lack vocabulary and knowledge which support topics that I choose. I have difficulty of express things in English.</p> <p>Vocabulary is the most difficult and important thing for me because vocabulary helps me to read English writings and research.</p> <p>When I write I use vocabularies in my head, but the vocabularies that I know in my head is mostly formed when I was in Elementary in the US. So I tend to have problems looking for the fit words in a paragraph in university.</p> <p>I think the most difficult things is that what I think is not be written in English because I don't know English words very much.</p> <p>I have difficulties with grammar and vocabulary. I know I have to learn day to day, but it's boring. For the sake of my future, I'll try.</p> <p>Grammar and spelling and vocabulary are ones I need to improve a lot more.</p> <p>I found it difficult to write complicated sentences. Because Japanese grammar is different from English grammar.</p> <p>I ranked Grammar 1 and Vocabulary 2, but both of those are the most difficult. That's because when I write a sentence, I or maybe Japanese tend to use a vague expression.</p> <p>I am not so good at grammar when I write English essay, so I'm worried about writing in accurate English.</p> <p>I am timid of my English vocabulary, grammar. So I think the most difficult thing is drafting. Because it needs vocabulary and grammar.</p> <p>Since I have an idea, I puzzle how to translate in English.</p> <p>I think making paragraphs are most difficult. Because I can't weave contents well.</p> <p>The most difficult thing is to connect sentences, because I am not good at editing paragraphs even if it is in Japanese.</p> <p>Drafting is most difficult because to write what I want to express in English with accuracy is not easy and it takes long time.</p>
Topics and Arguments	<p>What I thought was most important and difficult was to construct an argument. Things such as drafting, referencing, and paragraphs are not that difficult once you acquire.</p> <p>I found it is the most difficult that form an argument because I am not good at speaking or writing logically.</p> <p>When I get a good topic to write about, my hand never stop. But it takes me a lot of time to find it.</p> <p>Finding a topic is really really hard for me. I always take too much time to think about the topic because I don't know if I write longer essay.</p>

	Forming an argument in English is the most difficult for me, because I'm not used to thinking in English.
English and Japanese different	<p>English is much different from Japanese.</p> <p>The reasons why I have some difficulties writing in English is that the way of thinking in English and that of Japanese are totally different.</p> <p>It is very difficult for me to translate into English. It is hard to tell the minute nuances.</p> <p>I can make easy paragraphs, but I can't make contents completely.</p>

Section 2B

Direct (English)	<p>The grammar structure of Japanese and English is different, Japanese has honorific word. I can't use one very well. Sometime, the honorific word will make my opinion indirect. By comparison English is more direct than Japanese.</p> <p>I think English is more emotional than Japanese. Japanese hides real emotion or idea to cooperate with people but English insists strongly.</p> <p>When I use Japanese, I can explain delicate feeling. In English, it is when I say so-so. But in English, there aren't so many ambiguous unclear phrase.</p> <p>When I write my opinion in English, it might be more simple than I write in Japanese.</p>
Confidence	It is better to work in English and Japanese. However, my English skills is becoming weaker and weaker. So I hesitate to use English.
Japanese familiar so easier	<p>I have no idea differences between the two [English and Japanese], but I have a thought. Because English isn't my mother tongue, it's hard to make sentences in English. Unless English is my mother tongue. I can't speak English better than Japanese. It's only problem whether it's mother tongue or not.</p> <p>Because I use English in my daily life, it has become easier for me to express what I feel and think in Japanese. However, I like English the phrases and expressions so it is very nice to write in English.</p> <p>Since I know a few patterns of expressing my thoughts in English, it is more difficult for me to write my opinion in English than in Japanese.</p> <p>Writing in English is very difficult. I can't tell my opinion well, But in Japanese I know many words, so it is easier to tell my opinion.</p> <p>Actually, communicate in English is more difficult that that of Japanese, but speaking English is fun.</p>

Section 2 C

<p>Enjoyed working in English (content)</p>	<p>I tried to write my essay that was easy to understand. Researching something in English made me not unpleasant very much.</p> <p>What I most challenged and interested was talked to my teacher about my essay. I am poor at speaking English, so when I talked to my teacher I was very nervous. But my teacher explained me very kindly.</p> <p>Research paper most interested me because think and write in English. That was hard for me at first but the more I wrote in English, the more interesting to do so.</p> <p>I think I can express my idea more logically in English than Japanese. When I write English, I can put my idea in order through paragraph writing.</p> <p>I think what most challenged me in learning how to write in English is that I have to focus on what I really want to say to the readers every time while writing essay in English.</p> <p>To research topic in English was really hard in English because it takes time and need to study a lot. But to express my opinions in English was nice. It is easier to show our emotions in English. I think I'm closer to the world than what I was before.</p> <p>Writing about world's topics or social topics is very useful, meaningful for me.</p> <p>I most challenged to make strong topics and make argument consistent. I think they are most important and difficult.</p>
<p>Enjoyed working in English (form)</p>	<p>What most challenged me is thinking about clearer expression in English. What most interested me was writing. What most changed the way I think about is learning about effective order of sentences.</p> <p>The most difficult and unfamiliar thing for me was to write simply.</p> <p>I challenged most to write English logically. And I was interested in various patterns of organisation to write English paragraph.</p> <p>From starting on studying how to write in English for academic purposes, I think that I'm putting the thing which I am going to write about in order. In other words, I'm thinking about paragraphs before writing.</p> <p>Not only this class, I wrote some sentence in English here. Whenever we wrote and use other people's work, we need clear bibliography or in-text citation. It's difficult for me because it was not my custom up to now. But I understand why this work is important, if there's no this kinds of work it means 'I stole someone's words', say, plagiarism.</p> <p>I learned English mostly through speaking and listening, since I had started to learn English in Middle School. Therefore, I still need and want to work on my grammar, spelling and learn a lot more vocabularies.</p>
<p>Difficulties</p>	<p>The most difficult thing was researching because materials I need for my essay were all written in English, and it takes me for so long to translate to Japanese, think, and write in English. If it is possible I'd like to use materials written in Japanese.</p>

	It was a real big challenge for me in writing, when I had to write more than 2000 words about myself in English. It was for papers of an entrance exam to another university.
Other	'We read the world wrong, and we say it deceived us' I cannot remember the author's name clearly. Actually, he was a poet.

Section 3	
Language important to understanding another culture	<p>I think talking with people in their language is the solidest way of learning because you could know their thought and culture and understand my own country.</p> <p>I think if we want to know English cultures, we need to learn English.</p> <p>I think it is very important to learn languages to understand other culture deeply.</p> <p>I want to understand an English speaker's thinking, so studying English is very important for me to do.</p>
Cultural understanding difficult	<p>I think English speakers and Japanese speakers have common ideas in basic areas like life or human rights, but they have little be different ideas in deeper area like emotion or culture and these are sometimes difficult to share or understand each other.</p> <p>Knowing other language is better than not knowing. But I think even if we can understand it that is not all to understand the culture. Though we do not know the word, if someone explains for us, we might understand it even we have big differences to our own culture. On the contrary, even if someone speaks English very well it doesn't always mean that he can understand the culture deeply so the answer of some questions depend on the case.</p>
Simply positive about English	<p>I love English. It opened the window to the world!</p> <p>When I speak English I feel free. I can say my feeling directly.</p> <p>Learning English leads to learning English speaker's feeling freshly. It's so fun.</p>
Cultural understanding not simply based on language	I personally believe that even each culture are defined and represented, each individual has its own 'culture' understanding.

Appendix 2 : Follow-up questionnaire

Fig. 9 Follow-up questionnaire : Skills ranked comparatively in terms of difficulty

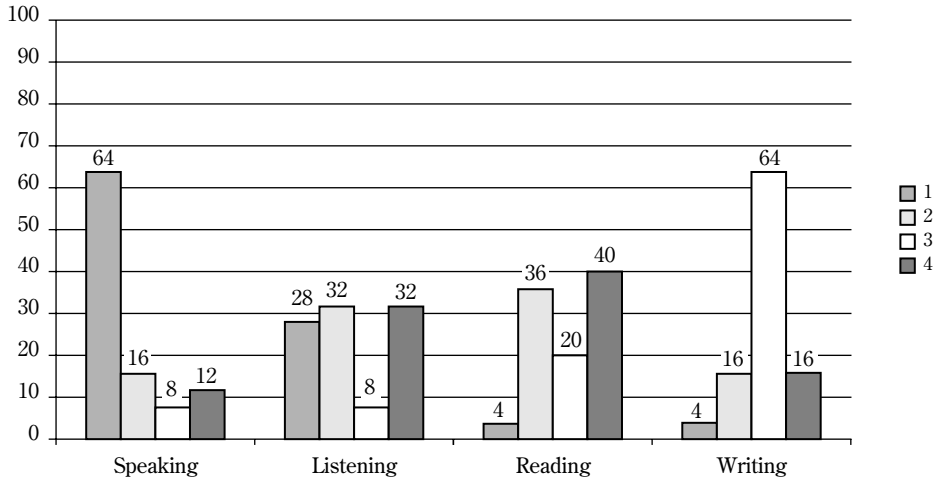


Fig. 10 Follow-up questionnaire : Skills ranked comparatively in terms of usefulness

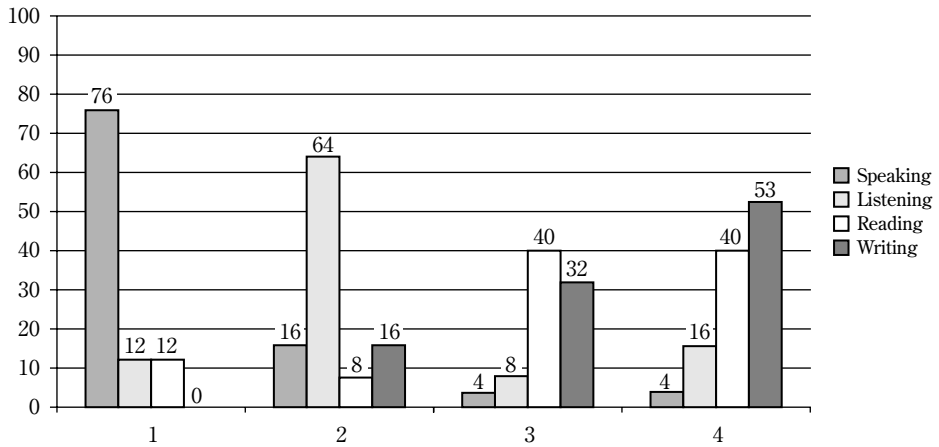
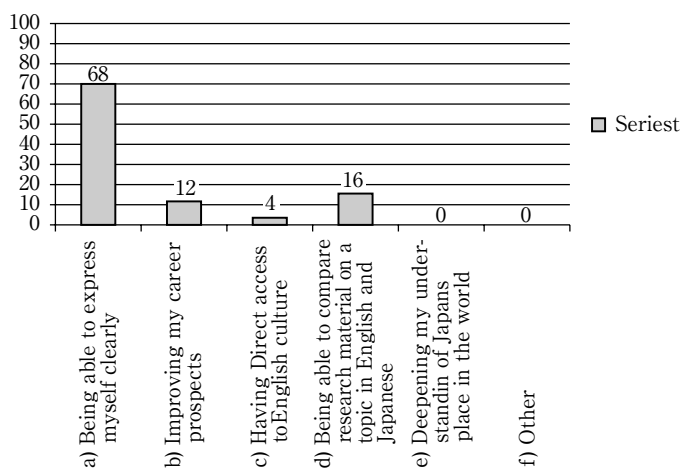


Fig. 11 Follow-up questionnaire : *In your opinion, what is the most important aspect of learning to research and write in English?*



Appendix 3 : Interview responses

Question	Response
1) Over the last few semesters we have been learning about writing and research methods in English. What most motivates you in your study of English writing skills?	<p>(A) 'Improving my English writing skills is what motivates me the most. Not only being able to speak and communicate in English is not what I want to achieve, but also to have the ability to write and influence other people is what I want to achieve in English.'</p> <p>(B) 'What motivates me in studying English writing skill is that I want to expand my knowledge through different language. The way of problems are presented can be different, so the way I learn about the topic can differ. In addition, my other motivation to learn English writing is because I am hoping to work in some sort of job that has international relation, therefore, being able to write well in English is going to be essential.'</p> <p>(C) 'It was good to learn how to write bibliography and citation. They changed my view of writing. Like, I have to insist "this is not my idea." I did not care about this if I took class only in Japanese.'</p> <p>(D) 'I think reading a book in English motivates me, because I can improve my power of expression and also I can learn many vocabularies which I don't use when I'm communicating with my friends. Furthermore, reading with other people, like in Literature class, motivates me.'</p>
2) Does the cross-cultural nature of your study (ie working in two languages, researching in two languages, and researching other cultures through English and Japanese, following arguments from English writers) affect your motivation in anyway? Is it	<p>(A) 'Studying in both Japanese and English does affect my motivation both in positive and negative ways. To a certain degree, reading, writing, or researching in English gives me a sense of an achievement and a sense that I am working on something meaningful, but when the English level I work on elevates too much, the stress becomes what I feel the most. But I've learned recently that I'll get used to it anyways, for either I am learning and improving, or I just really got used to such stresses.'</p> <p>(B) 'Yes, it does motivates me in positive way because I can get more information through different perspective about one topic, more information I can access to.'</p>

<p>positive or negative and why?</p>	<p>(C) 'Yes, and rather negative. When translating Japanese into English, I feel uncomfortable a little. Because however I try to make the sentence close meaning to the original one, it's still difficult.'</p> <p>(D) 'When I'm researching in two languages, it sometimes makes me feel uncomfortable. If I'm researching about other cultures in English, I can read the words, but it is still difficult to understand. So I often have to use my dictionary. Though, it makes me to study more, and can learn English a lot.'</p>
<p>3) Does working across cultures and languages change your basic outlook on the world at all? Has your outlook ever changed significantly due to being able to work in English and Japanese? Have there been any key, perhaps even dramatic moments (the Eureka! moment) where because of your study and abilities in English and Japanese you have felt changed or felt your view of the world significantly changed?</p>	<p>(A) 'Being able to speak both English and Japanese widened my outlook on both outside and inside Japan. First of all, being able to speak English, ever since I was a child I've always had the idea that this ability would significantly widen the choices of my future job, since I would be able to look outside of Japan. Secondly, knowing, at least, a little part of outside Japan, I was able to compare it to Japan and realize a lot of aspects of Japan that is beautiful, which I never realized till I got out of Japan.'</p> <p>(B) No response.</p> <p>(C) 'I think so, but not so sure. I feel my outlook was greatly changed after being able to speak English when I was a high school student though. I think there was not dramatic moment, but my view of point has been gradually changed by reading book written in English. For example, when I read English book whichever the topic is, the view of content has wide view, maybe by chance, like, the writer seems like he/she looks the issue globally. And when I read books, even in Japanese, I sometimes take the issue objective as someone outside of Japan.'</p> <p>(D) 'I think my ability in English and Japanese has changed my outlook. For example, when I'm studying other culture and reading a book in English and Japanese, I can think by either of the sides. Also traveling abroad stimulates me and broaden my outlook remarkably. Feeling other countries culture by myself changes my outlook the most.'</p>