TAKING IT TO TASK

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our second issue of *Taking it to Task*! From 2016 we have decided to change our regular publication to a digital newletter format. We hope to be able to accept a greater variety of submissions than we did with OnTask, which will still include theoretical articles and practical lesson plans that were the heart of OnTask, but also opinion/think pieces, book reviews and TBLT-related news.

In this second issue, we are pleased to include articles from Muhsilin Rasuki (Curtin University; Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember) as well as from Lachlan Jackson (Ritsumeikan University) and Dale Ward (Kansai University). The first article by Muhsilin Rasuki not only discusses the idea of integrating a genre-based approach to teaching L2 writing and TBLT, but also provides concrete sample tasks, based on the ideas discussed, that could readily be used in tomorrow's classroom. The second article by Lachlan Jackson and Dale Ward, then, reports on a documentary task that they implemented in their English as a foreign language classrooms at a Japanese university. Both articles provide us with practical teaching ideas and a great seed for more.

We hope that you enjoy reading this issue, and if you have a TBLT-related article, lesson plan, book review or opinion/think piece that you would like to submit for consideration in a future issue of *Taking it to Task*, please contact us at tbltinasia@gmail.com

Shoko Sasayama, Publications Chair   Justin Harris, Coordinator

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENTS

1. Workshop by Dr. Lourdes Ortega (Georgetown University)

As most of our members will be aware, we hold a biennial "TBLT in Asia" conference, the next of which will be held in 2018. In 2017 we will hold a special mini-conference featuring a workshop by Dr. Lourdes Ortega (Georgetown University) and a poster presentation session on July 29, 2017. The workshop will be held at Temple University's Osaka campus, and the exact details, including a call for poster presentations, will be announced on our website very soon.

2. The 7th International Conference on Task-Based Language Teaching

The 7th International Conference on TBLT will be held in Spain from April 19-20, 2017. This is *the* international conference on TBLT, which takes place biennially. The past conferences have always been intellectually stimulating with plenaries by topnotch scholars in the field and presentations and hands-on workshops on various cutting-edge research and practices. It targets not only researchers but also practitioners, and there's no better place to learn more about TBLT. The theme of this year's conference is "Tasks in Context." For more information, please check their website at http://www.tblt.org/conferences/2017/home/

ARTICLES

Integrating a Genre-Based Approach and Task-Based Instruction in Teaching Writing Skills

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ABSTRACT

Integrating a genre-based approach and task-based instruction into the context of teaching writing skills can help learners learn to write more accurately and appropriately. In essence, a genre-based approach allows learners to see the underlying features of a text which make it both similar to and different from other texts, while task-based instruction allows teachers to design and sequence materials or tasks that best suit the learners' needs and proficiency levels. Although the tasks used in this paper relate to a particular context of teaching (i.e. teaching academic L2 writing skills), the principle is applicable to other teaching contexts as well.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional writing pedagogy focused on processes like planning, brainstorming, drafting, editing, and revising texts that are applicable to any writing genre (see Hyland, 2003). However, it is now argued that it is more meaningful to expose learners to writing conventions of particular texts (Paltridge, 2007) through a genre-based approach (Feez, 2002).

A genre-based approach applies discourse analysis (DA) to language pedagogy (Hatch, 1992). DA deals with the analysis of language use as represented in texts (Brown and Yule, 1983; Gee, 2014). This analysis usually covers both textual and contextual features of texts. Textual features refer to the forms used (e.g., lexical units and sentence structures), while contextual features refer to the categories creating meaning (e.g., purposes, norms, social conventions, and schemata) (Paltridge, 1994). As such, a genre-based approach to L2 teaching attempts to make connections between form and meaning in language use obvious to learners to help them express their ideas correctly and appropriately.

Although rationales for a genre-based approach have been advocated in the literature and have also been applied in empirical studies (e.g., Hyland, 2003; Yasuda, 2011), little has been written which specifically addresses the practical needs of teachers. This article, therefore, aims at providing a practical outline of how a genre-based approach may be applied in L2 teaching,

with a focus on L2 writing skills. This paper proposes the idea that such an approach will be more effective if implemented along with task-based instruction.

According to Ellis (2009) there are four main criteria of tasks. First, tasks must create the conditions where learners focus on meaning of the language used. Second, tasks must present a communicative gap which requires learners to comprehend and/or convey information. Third, tasks must require learners to use their own linguistic resources in comprehending and/or conveying the information. Fourth, tasks must have a clearly defined communicative outcome. If one of the four criteria is absent, tasks will rather turn into a set of exercises (Lambert, in press).

Also, Ellis (2009) argued that tasks do not always require learners to produce output or convey information. Some tasks may be designed only for comprehending information. This type of task is especially useful in teaching L2 learners at the beginner level, for they allow them to process input effectively which, after some time, might also help them develop their basic comprehension and productive skills (cf., Shintani, 2012, 2016).

CLASSROOM APPLICATION

The tasks presented here aim to raise learners' awareness of both textual and contextual features of academic texts in English and to enable them to apply the features in writing a short academic text. The tasks are intended for learners who have undergone training in general English writing skills but have little or no experience in writing academic texts. As such, it is hoped that after the instruction, learners will be able to distinguish the discourse features of academic writing from those of other types of writing and apply the features in their writing thereafter.

In what follows, task implementation follows the procedure proposed by Ellis (2006). The procedure includes three phases: pre-task, during-task, and post-task. The goal of the pre-task is to help the students become familiar with the information usually included in academic texts and how the information is usually presented in this particular genre of writing. Once the students are familiar with the features, they are then given a chance to practice writing a short academic text based on some information given. In terms of content, the task used is similar to the texts in the pre-task phase to ease the students' cognitive load on the content and thus to enable them to focus more on applying their linguistic resources in constructing messages in the text (Lambert and Robinson, 2014). Finally, the post-task phase involves 'reflecting on the task' (Ellis, 2006), but teachers may use different options in different instructional settings.

THE PRE-TASK PHASE

Learners are given two texts on the same topic (Figure 1). They are then asked to identify any differences between the texts. To help them, they are given a piece of paper with a column to fill in (Figure 2). Learners complete the column with the teacher's help. The teacher informs the purpose of identifying the differences.

Text 1	Text 2
Why don't the students like English so much?	**The Use of English and Indonesian in the Classroom: Students' Perspectives**
A few months ago I carried out a survey study about students' perspectives on teachers' use of English and Indonesian in the classroom. I carried out the survey study in an Indonesian university with Indonesian learners of English as a foreign language. I collected the data using a questionnaire. I figured out that most students wanted their teachers to use more Indonesian than English language. They thought that English was difficult for them to understand. Only a few of them wanted that their teachers use English more than Indonesian in the classroom. So, many students don't like their teachers to use English too much because it is difficult for them to understand.	This paper reports on a survey study conducted in an Indonesian university in May 2016. The survey aimed at unraveling the students' perspectives on the use of English and Indonesian by the teachers in the classroom. 200 Indonesian students of English participated in the study. The data were collected through a questionnaire. The results showed that 180 students believed that teachers needed to use more Indonesian than English, while 20 students believed that teachers needed to use English more than Indonesian. Such different perspectives might be related to a variety of different factors. Further studies are needed to unravel the factors.

Figure 1. Texts reporting students' perspectives on teachers' language use in the classroom

Activity: Fill in each column below with the differences of the two texts.

Criteria	Text 1	Text 2	Reason(s)
Degree of Formality			Text 1. Text 2.
Degree of Objectivity			Text 1. Text 2.
Information Presented			Text 1. Text 2.
Grammar Used			Text 1. Text 2.
Vocabulary Used			Text 1. Text 2.

Figure 2. Form for analyzing the discourse features

Figure 3 below provides example answers to the activity above.

Criteria	Text 1	Text 2	Reason(s)

Degree of Formality	Less formal	Formal	Text 1 - uses contraction (e.g., don't).
			     - uses a personal tone and thus sounds like a conversation.
			 Text 2 - does not use contraction.
			     - avoids using a personal tone entirely.

Degree of Objectivity	Less objective	Objective	Text 1 - expresses empathy and personal judgements that are not supported by complete evidence (e.g., the last sentence/conclusion, the title). Text 2 - avoids expressing emotion or empathy and presents evidence to support arguments.
Information Presented	Colloquially, subjectively presented	Formally, objectively presented	Text 1 - uses first person point of view. Text 2 - is disconnected with the author's point of view.
Grammatical structures	Excessive use of simple sentence structures and active voice	Varied use of sentence structures and active and passive voice	Text 1 - uses simple sentences thoroughly even when it is necessary to use complex sentences to elaborate arguments. - uses active voice excessively. Text 2. - uses complex sentences and passive voice wherever necessary to elaborate arguments or maintain objectivity.
Vocabulary	Personal pronoun and colloquial verbs	Impersonal noun phrases and strong verbs	Text 1 - uses first person pronoun 'I' and colloquial verbs (e.g., carried out, figured out). Text 2 - uses impersonal noun phrases instead of first person pronoun and uses strong verbs instead of colloquial ones (e.g. conduct, showed).

Figure 3. Example answers to the fill-in-column activity

Although the time set for the pre-task phase for oral tasks usually ranges from 1 to 10 minutes (Ellis, 2006, p. 25), the current pre-task phase might need to be longer initially and gradually reduced in subsequent meetings after the students are familiar with the task and how they are expected to complete it (Lambert and Robinson, 2014). Also, the pre-task phase activity above may be done individually, in pairs, or in a small group.

THE DURING-TASK PHASE

After completing the pre-task phase, learners then do the main task. They are given information taken from an imaginary survey about students' reasons for studying in an English

education program at an Indonesia university (Figure 4). The information given to learners, however, may be tuned in accordance with their educational background. In the following activity, learners are asked to compose a short text in academic discourse consisting of 100-200 words using the information given. They are allowed to provide additional information wherever necessary.

Survey	Reasons for studying in an English program
Setting	University of Teko'lo, South Paseban Province, Indonesia
Participants	500 undergraduate students studying in an English education program
Instrument used	A questionnaire
Findings	Become an English teacher (50%) Work overseas (10%) Study overseas (20%) Parents' pressure (10%) Like English (5%) No reason (5%)

Figure 4. Students' reasons for studying English

THE POST-TASK PHASE

Having completed the main task, learners are asked to tell the teacher what they think of the task and their performance on it. The teacher then asks learners to prepare a topic to write in the next meeting and informs them that the feedback on the current task will be given then.

CONCLUSION

A high degree of systematicity, strict organization and reference to academic conventions constitute the main features which distinguish academic writing from other types of writing. Mastering the systematicity, organization and conventions is necessary for learners to cope with writing academic texts effectively (Jones, 2007). In this article, it has been argued that integrating a genre-based approach and task-based instruction to teaching L2 writing skills can help learners write effectively. The principles of a genre-based approach allows learners to see the subtle features of texts which make them both similar to and different from other texts, while task-based teaching allows teachers to design and implement instruction that best suits learners' needs and proficiency levels.

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Rethinking Student Presentations: A Task-Based Language Teaching Approach to Making Short Group Smartphone Documentaries

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INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the authors' experience designing and facilitating a Japanese university task-based language learning (TBLT) orientated course in which students created short group film documentaries on smartphones. The authors first describe the rationale of a documentary project as an alternative to PowerPoint presentations. Following that, we outline the way the project was structured – in seven basic stages – in order to keep students 'on task' and encourage learner autonomy. This is followed by a description of the types of documentaries which were produced by students, including some student feed-back on the project. The authors then describe particular challenges that the project presented to learners. The paper concludes with some reflective comments from the authors on suggested improvements and further approaches to the course described.

RATIONALE FOR THIS PROJECT

As Al-Issa and Al-Qubtan (2010) have noted, oral presentations have long been considered an essential component of the communicative-orientated language classroom for the ways they can foster, amongst other things, the integration of language skills, opportunities to practice speaking, and the acquisition of new knowledge through an English medium. And while there exists a range of approaches that could be taken toward the implementation of oral presentations (poster presentations, speeches, etc.), several oft-held assumptions about the use of PowerPoint have overwhelmingly made it the most utilised presentation format in the Japanese university language classroom. These assumptions include the belief that PowerPoint helps more reserved students structure their presentations, that students enjoy the format, and that the skills that students acquire using the software are transferable to "real life" when they graduate (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010, p. 230).

Whilst the authors acknowledge the potential for PowerPoint to be used as an effective tool in the language learning classroom when used in a "controlled way" (Morgan, 2008; see also Apple & Kikuchi, 2007), we wish to critically examine the assumptions outlined above.

The TBLT-orientated project reported on in this paper was conceived as an alternative to "Death by PowerPoint," or the idea that PowerPoint presentations in Japanese Language classrooms too often become dull, predictable and uninteresting experiences for instructors and students alike. This is because, in reality, PowerPoint presentations are often mono-dimensional and tedious, with students too often reading directly from slides. Similarly, while some students may enjoy working with the software, many students find speaking 'solo' in front of the whole class intimidating or anxiety-producing, and as such do not enjoy the language learning opportunity (for an extensive study of this in the Japanese university context, see Williams & Andrade, 2008). Finally, the tacit assumption that students will need to specifically use PowerPoint (in English) in their future careers deserves scrutiny. Although scholars such as MacAnthony and McCrohan (2013, p. 137) have proclaimed that "it would seem prudent to instruct any future university graduates in the making of effective presentations in English as a marketable employment skill useful in their post-graduation job-hunt", comprehensive studies into university graduates' use of English in the workplace have seriously questioned the extent to which the majority of the Japanese workforce either utilize or even require English in professional settings (Matsuda 2014; see also Kubota, 2012). Stated simply, for most students, it seems unlikely that they will ever use PowerPoint (in English) after they graduate. While oral presentation skills should undoubtedly be taught, teachers need not rely on a PowerPoint format which will be of questionable use after graduation.

As an alternative to the conventional use of oral PowerPoint presentations, in this TBLT project students were asked to produce a 5-minute documentary on a topic with what might be termed 'some socially redeeming value.' Such a task fits the TBLT framework in that it corresponds to a "real-world activity" (Ellis, 2003, p. 6) in which learners are required "to use language, with an emphasis on meaning, to obtain an objective" (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001, cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 5). Adhering to an important aspect of TBLT instruction, the project also produces non-linguistic outcomes in that it fosters an important cooperative aspect, with students working in groups consisting of two or three members. Of course, interpersonal skills, computer skills, the opportunity to display initiative and teamwork, for example, are broader skills that are not necessarily confined to the blanket term "linguistic outcomes". Furthermore, in order to complete the project successfully, students were required to focus on multiple skills including brainstorming, research, planning, interviewing, translating, drafting, and speaking, in addition to incorporating IT skills.

Drawing from Miller and Haffner (2015), who, in their English for Scientific Purposes class in a Hong Kong tertiary setting, successfully had their students design and video-blog original group experiments, we also intended to foster learner autonomy by extending in-class learning to out-of-class learning. The project also supported out-of- class learning with a technology-enhanced

learning environment (ibid, pp. 215–216). We hoped to encourage learner autonomy (Newman & Richards, 2015) by presenting the teacher as a facilitator rather than the main source of knowledge. It was hoped this would encourage independent learning whereby students could make their own decisions in a context in which individual learning styles would be recognised.

With Japan now occupying first place in terms of cell phone ownership and usage in the world, "technology continues to drastically reshape the parameters of how English is taught and studied" there (Selwood, 2012). Almost all university students in Japan now own smartphones and are proficient in using them, so making the case for utilizing smartphones in (and out of) the language classroom is not difficult.

Further advantages of having students create smart phone documentaries included the fact that students must utilise four macro skills: in order to conduct research they have to read, to narrate they have to write and speak, to interview they have to both listen and speak, to add subtitles they have to proofread and write. In addition, as a group activity, the task involves an element of collaborative learning. Students can 'play to their strengths' and feel they are making a valuable and unique contribution to the group. This, in itself, is less intimidating for shyer, more reserved students. In our experience, students find this approach more enjoyable and motivating, and are also more inclined to offer peer feedback.

PROJECT STRUCTURE

Implemented over many weeks, this project presents challenges for both instructor and students. It is essential that the instructor models and describes the process (Lemov, 2015) guiding the students through each stage of the project. All groups must work sequentially through each stage, completing each part to the instructor's satisfaction before proceeding to the next by the use of 'checkpoints'. The importance of the instructor keeping all groups 'on task' cannot be overemphasized, since it is easy for a group to suddenly fall behind if they miss a stage or work too slowly. If students complete each procedure correctly, the instructor can then "pass off the baton of responsibility to them" (Lemov, p. 368), thus engendering in students "a greater sense of accomplishment, independence and ownership over classroom structures" (ibid, p. 368). The project can be outlined in eight basic steps as follows.

1. EXPLANATION & RATIONALISATION

The instructor explains the format of the project and why s/he feels it is a useful activity for students not only in terms of language learning but also in terms of transferrable skills such as planning and outlining, familiarity with video-making applications, interview techniques and so forth. An advantage of this approach is that students must work independently outside the

classroom, and a palpable sense of achievement can be gained from implementing a project in English (Kiernan, p. 188). The task will help students to explore and describe in English a topic which interests them and which they can share with their classmates. In addition they will have to familiarise themselves with appropriate technology which will help them realize their goal. As mentioned above, in most cases students are already familiar with basic smartphone technology which can potentially offer them a host of "multi-sensory learning opportunities and a chance to become more autonomous in their learning" (Palanac, 2015, para 1).

2. EXAMPLE DOCUMENTARIES

It is essential that students watch examples of short documentaries since this will be the clearest outline of what they are required to do, helping students understand the key fact that a documentary presents a *viewpoint* on an issue which is important to them and is also interesting for the viewer. As instructors who teach Japanese university writing classes often observe, after choosing a topic for an essay, students often have difficulties in deciding and then framing *what they want to say*. Though an overgeneralization, some scholars have observed that Japanese students "are not well trained in writing critically, arguing coherently, or expressing their views with conviction or verve ...[and that]...they have trouble with specific forms of knowledge manipulation and production that some people, with different schooling experiences, might take for granted" (McVeigh, 2002, p.13). Wherever possible, then, students should watch several good examples of short documentaries (a) from the internet/media (b) made by previous classes, and (c) created by their instructor, and be asked to identify overarching themes, viewpoints, arguments, techniques and the like.

It is a common-sense, though oft-forgotten principle, that instructors should not ask students to perform tasks which they themselves have not already attempted, and there are compelling reasons why it is desirable for instructors to create their own documentaries. Firstly, doing so helps teachers realistically appreciate the challenges their students will face, including the logistical and time requirements that "rookie" documentarians will encounter. Secondly it is essential that the teacher use such scaffolding as a way of familiarising students with key concepts including how to use appropriate tools and methods effectively (Hannafin, Hill & Land, 1999; Hannafin, Land & Oliver, 1999). Social learning theorist Albert Bandura (1977) has noted that learning becomes laborious if students rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do, commenting that, "Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (p.22).

3. Suggested themes

While some students quickly develop their own ideas and enthusiasm for the project, others will need more guidance and encouragement, and this is commonly seen among those students who are relatively unfamiliar with autonomous learning. For this reason, a list of possible themes was presented to students as a way of stimulating their own ideas. Suggestions for documentary projects included the following:

a. An interview with an interesting person, or with professors, university   students or citizens giving their opinions about a topic, (for example, *working poor, Japan's relations with its neighbours.)*

b. A report on a group's activities, (for example, *a volunteer group* or an activist group such as *a local branch of Amnesty International*.)

c. The solution to a problem: identify a problem, describe it, suggest a solution (for example a relatively minor problem such as *smoking on campus, university food,* or a more serious problem such as *gender issues).* At this stage of the process it is worth pointing out to students that their topic should be 'manageable' and not too wide-ranging. For example, rather than 'The Environment', students should specialize in a particular aspect, for instance 'Recycling on campus,' or 'The impact of an alien species on a local ecosystem.'

d. A "case study" describing how someone overcame a challenge (for example, *an interview with a successful student athlete.)*

e. An important issue. Introducing classmates to an important issue which they may not be familiar with (for example, *child safety in cars, disabled access,* etc).

Students should be strongly discouraged, if not prohibited, from creating documentaries on familiar, well-worn themes in Japanese culture such as food, temples and traditional arts. As valid as these themes are, students need to be reminded that, even though they are producing documentaries in English, their target audience is composed of their classmates rather than people who are completely unfamiliar with aspects of Japanese culture. Consequently, content already well-known to students and instructors generally leads to boring, generic presentations. Students should therefore be encouraged to delve more deeply into their own interests with entreaties from the teacher to "*Tell us something we don't know,*" and, "*Tell us something new.*"

4. Project Stages

Students must be familiarised with all stages of the project. These include brainstorming, outlining, research, drafting, and producing a final version in English. At each stage, students

should hand in hard copies for the instructor to check. In many respects this process is not dissimilar to the writing of an academic essay and students should be able to draw on their experience and knowledge of "process writing" in this regard.

5. PRODUCTION TIPS

In most cases this will be the first time students have attempted to make a documentary film. Thus they will require tips and advice on documentary filmmaking techniques. These can be divided into two categories. Firstly, students will likely require advice pertaining to the content and overall shape of their documentaries, with particular attention being paid to such things as narrative arc, storyline, and perspective presentation. Secondly, they will need instruction on technical aspects such as deciding whether a 'narration' or interview style will be used, how to frame a shot, how to get better sound, how to use graphics, animation, subtitles, and so forth. Students were encouraged to experiment with a number of free applications such as iMovie, Moviemaker and the like. Furthermore, they independently made use of tutorials on YouTube in order to familiarise themselves with their chosen software.

6. PEER VIEWING / REVIEWING

Students may at this stage watch their classmates' "documentaries in progress," in order to critique, offer advice and make suggestions on possible improvements. Not only is it enjoyable for students to watch their classmates' documentaries, it also engenders a certain amount of self-reflection, as students compare the progress and quality of their own project with that of their peers. It also provides further productive *and* receptive communicative opportunities in the target language.

7. REFLECTION

When the documentary is complete or near complete, students should be encouraged to engage in active reflection as a means of deciding how many of their production goals have been met, and what further work, if any, needs to be accomplished. This is done by means of a checklist provided by the teacher. Further, instructors can provide valuable guidance by means of individual consultation sessions with each group.

8. CLASS "FILM FESTIVAL"

When documentaries have been completed, it is enjoyable and motivating for groups to show their films during a class "film festival." Films can be watched as students revolve from one group to the next, and presenters can field questions, in English, from their audience. Finally a vote can be held in order to decide who receives an "Academy Award" for best documentary.

WHAT KIND OF PROJECTS DID STUDENTS PRODUCE?

Students produced a wide variety of content in their documentaries which reflected their own personal interests. As one would expect, there were varying levels of motivation, production values and language output which significantly affected the quality of work presented. Topics included the following:

- The environment (a local river eco-system, recycling, solar power)
- Disabled rights (wheel chair access on campus, home care for a disabled family member)
- Politics (Why are there low levels of political engagement among university students? How can more women become involved in government? Should the voting age be lowered?)
- Health (Student smoking, dietary/sleeping habits, exercise.)
- Relationships (How many students wish to get married? What do they expect from a relationship? How have relationships compared to their parents' or grandparents' generations?)
- Public policy (Should Japan encourage more immigration? How big a problem is Japan's falling birth rate?)
- An organization the student admires or is involved with, such an NGO or NPO
- A student activist group, such as one concerned with the welfare of stray animals on campus.
- Human Rights (Gay marriage, the rights of immigrant communities in Japan.)

WHAT CHALLENGES DID THIS PROJECT PRESENT?

This project presented particular challenges to students. There were certain logistical/time constraints produced by the reality of meeting once (or twice) a week for a university English class. This meant that students needed to become motivated to work independently outside class. As described above, some groups were painfully slow in choosing a theme (one student remarked, "It was too difficult to decide our theme. It was also difficult to make documentary. But it was fun. This experience was very valuable for me").

Interpersonal relations among students also had a bearing on the success of the final documentary since collaboration was a key element of the project. The fairness of "load sharing", for example, had an important effect on how much work was accomplished. It was for precisely this reason that students were required to submit transcripts detailing what each member of the group had contributed to the overall production of the documentary.

The project also presented challenges with regard to use of the target language. Since student autonomy was an important element of the project, the amount of English actually spoken was affected by individual student motivation, and students in turn affected one another's motivation and language production, for better or for worse. In addition, some groups fell into the trap, when interviewing or 'vox-popping', of filling their documentaries with the comments of their subjects, rather than presenting *themselves* speaking in English and summarizing the comments of interviewees. Others had an over-abundance of Japanese language content in their films, with subtitles of varying degrees of accuracy presented as the only English content. It is to be emphasized to students that *they* should be speaking the majority of English in their documentaries. Again, this was a further reason why groups were required to submit typed transcripts indicating how much English was produced by each member.

The amount of individual technical knowledge and proficiency also greatly influenced the degrees to which groups were successful in completing their tasks. While the technical challenges of a documentary project are not terrifically complex, in many cases students needed to "get up to speed" with certain important skills, for instance deciding which editing software to use, not to mention the nuts and bolts skills of filming, sound recording, editing, interviewing and so forth.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

In an open-ended questionnaire, students were asked to do some reflective writing on their experiences as documentarians. Reaction to the project was varied, reflecting levels of motivation, interest, language and technical ability. Responses are thematically organized below:

a. The project stimulated real world interaction with native speakers ("Especially, interviewing foreigners in Kinkakuji was interesting event. We could exchange opinions and have a chat about not only Japan but also each of the person's country. This is fresh and stimulating experiences for us.")
b. Making a documentary was a challenging but rewarding experience ("And making the video is quite an experience. And this is very fun. So I think this activity should do [sic] next year.")
c. The project presented technical challenges ("I think this activity is very effective. However, it was [sic] very hard task for me. Our team couldn't make this documentary by using only i-movie soft [software/smartphone applications]. We needed many soft. Using many soft is very difficult and took much time. So it was a hard task, I think.")

d. The project fostered communication and collaboration between members ("I think this activity is invaluable, because this activity works [sic] in pairs this needs much more communication.")

e. The experience was challenging but enjoyable ("It was difficult but challenging. I enjoyed it.")

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The authors have taught this course to numerous groups in four different Japanese universities over several semesters. As a result, we offer some reflective comments on points which should be borne in mind when implementing a task-based project such as the one outlined in this paper in future tertiary English classes.

Firstly, it is essential that realistic amounts of class time be devoted to the project, since students must go through a number of important stages in order to ensure success. It should also be borne in mind that the successful completion of this task will require striking a balance between what students are able to achieve in class and what tasks need to be completed outside of the classroom. This balance will of course be influenced by inter-related factors such as student motivation, proficiency levels and other goals of and pressures upon the curriculum. In the authors' experience, this task, running concurrently with other components of the course, can quite easily require 50 - 75% of a once-a-week single semester course. The strict creation and monitoring of "checkpoints" along the way is crucial, as students build their projects sequentially over a period of weeks if not months. This should be factored in to the creation of the class curriculum, since students who are unfairly given insufficient time to complete each stage of the project are, in effect, being set up to fail.

Secondly, it is crucial that students are presented with sufficient scaffolding in order to have them clearly understand what goals and expectations must be satisfied in order to successfully complete the assignment. This would include elements such as overall length, the quality and quantity of language production, the submission of transcripts and so forth. Ideally, students should be exposed to examples of both "professional" documentaries (e.g. "Food Inc.", "Supersize Me") which are both informative, interesting and accessible, as well as models produced by instructors and students from previous classes.

Thirdly, experience shows us that students should be given the opportunity to form larger groups, since they can offer a wider skill set from which the group can draw, increasing the chance of collaborative learning.

Finally, the project described in this paper illustrates but one approach to this kind of activity. It could also be incorporated as the final assignment of a full-term "content" course, or even an entire course devoted to video presentations which slowly build from easier tasks (e.g. a self-introduction in English filmed on a smartphone) to slightly more difficult tasks (e.g. a description of a place or activity, a speech about a social issue) and finally a group documentary which is brainstormed, planned, researched, written and presented primarily in the target language. If educators can accept the premise that learning necessarily requires risk taking, then the task-based project described in this paper has the potential to encourage students to step outside of their "comfort zone" as they utilize core language skills, familiar technology, autonomy and collaboration to explore topics with a socially redeeming value.

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